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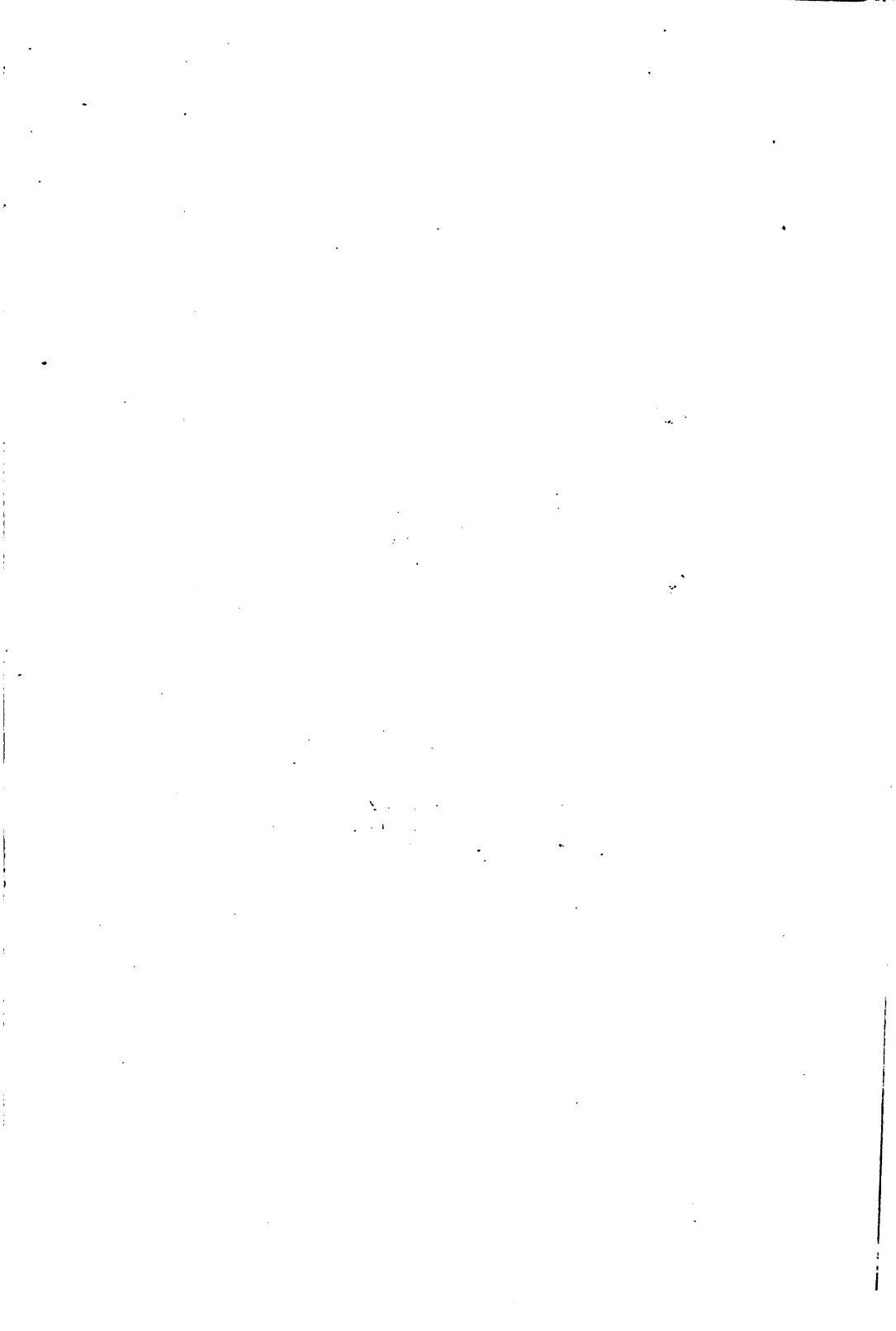
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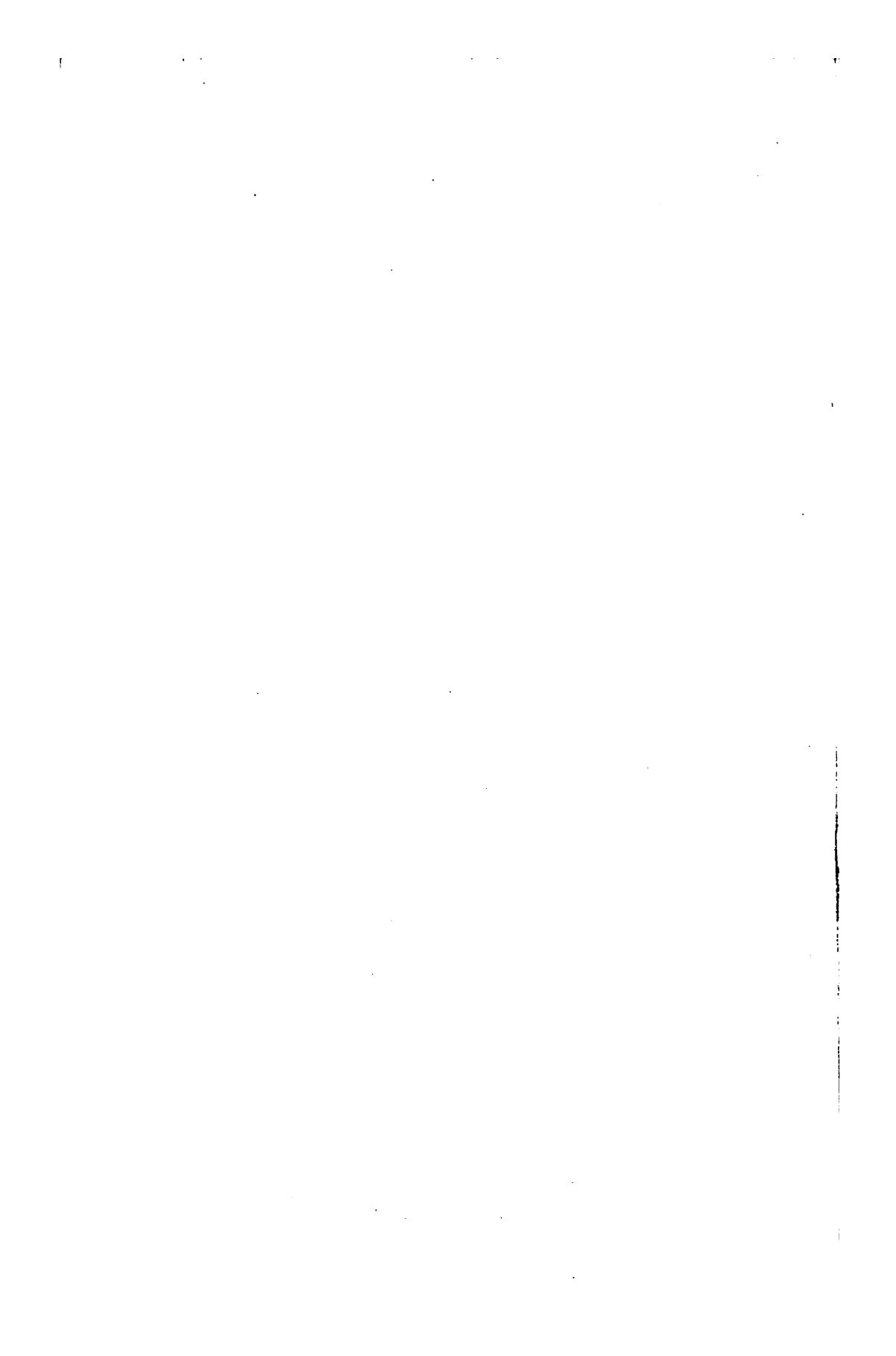


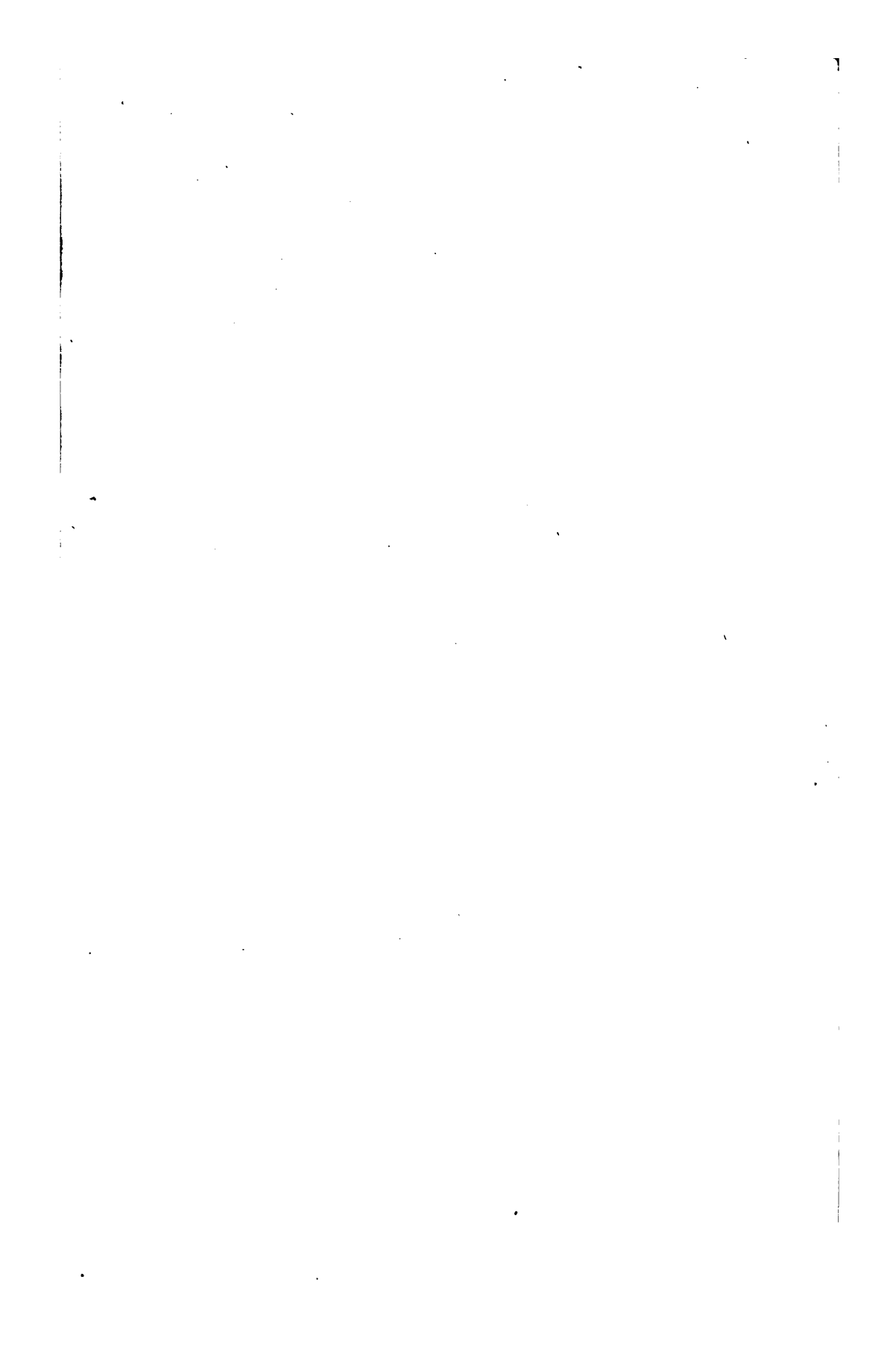
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ROAD SCRAPINGS.







"THE DEFIANCE HAS GONE 10 MINUTES!"

ROAD SCRAPINGS:

COACHES AND COACHING.



THE DEVIL AMONGST THE TAILORS!

LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

—
1882.

ROAD SCRAPINGS:

COACHES AND COACHING.

BY
CAPTAIN M. E. ^{MARTIN} HAWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "THE SILVER GAYHOUND."

London:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.
1882.

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INTRODUCTION.

In offering these pages to the public, my object has been confined to imparting such advice, in matters connected with *coaching*, as has been suggested by long experience; whilst, in order to dissipate as much as possible the "dryness" of being told "what to do" and "how to do it," I have mingled the instruction with illustrative anecdotes and incidents, which may afford amusement to the general reader. If whilst my bars are "whistling" up the hill, and rattling down, I have been able to combine some useful hints with the amusement often to be discovered in what I have termed "Scrapings of the Road," my desire will be amply gratified.

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ROAD SCRAPINGS.

Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum
Collegisse juvat.

CHAPTER I.

4

The revival—Magazine magnificence—Death of coaching—
Resurrection—Avoid powder—Does the post pull?—
Summering hunters—The “Lawyer’s Daughter”—An
unexpected guest.

O their honour be it said, that there
are noblemen and gentlemen in the
land, who willingly devote time,
energy, and money, to keep the dust flying
from the wheels of the real old stage coach.
The importance of driving well, and the pleasure
derivable therefrom, are both enhanced by the

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ROAD SCRAPINGS.

ERRATA.

- Page 5. For "Cheny Angel," *read* "Cherry Angel."
" 10. }
" 25. } For "tenet," *read* "terret."
" 52. }
" 36. For "Tynemouth," *read* "Teignmouth."
" 69. For "now the Bride," *read* "now the Buda."
" 132. For "Bamby Moor," *read* "Barnby Moor."

land, who willingly devote time
energy, and money, to keep the dust flying
from the wheels of the real old stage coach.
The importance of driving well, and the pleasure
derivable therefrom, are both enhanced by the

last expiring spark with the "Brighton Age," until his health broke down and he succumbed. Another coach started against him on the opposite days by Kingston and Ewell, called the "Recherché" (a private venture), but it did not last even so long as the "Age." Here was the interval! The end of everything.

In 1868 a coach was started to Brighton called the "Old Times,"* the property of a company composed of all the *élite* of the coaching talent of the day. It proved a great success, and became very popular; especially, it may be added, among its own shareholders, who, being all coachmen, in turn aspired to the box—those who could, as well as those who only fancied they could. The initiated will at once understand how fatal this was to the comfort of every fresh team which came under their lash.

* This coach was managed and driven by Captain Laurie and Captain Haworth.

At the end of the coaching season (October 30th, 1868) the stock was sold, and realised two-thirds more than had been invested in it. The goodwill and a large portion of the stock were purchased by Chandos Pole, who was afterwards joined by the Duke of Beaufort and "Cheny Angel," and these gentlemen carried on the coach for three years.

The second coach started in the revival was one to Beckenham and Bromley, horsed and driven by Charles Hoare, who afterwards extended it to Tunbridge Wells. It was very well appointed, and justly popular. The ball once set rolling, coaching quickly became a mania. The railings of the White Horse Cellars were placarded with boards and handbills of all colours and dimensions: "A well-appointed four-horse coach will leave Hatchett's Hotel on such and such days, for nearly every provincial town within fifty miles of London."

From the 1st May to the 1st September the pavement opposite to the coach-office was crowded by all the "hossy" gentlemen of the period. Guards and professionals might be seen busy with the coach-ladders, arranging their passengers, especially attentive to those attired in muslin, who seemed to require as much coupling and pairing as pigeons in a dovecot. Knots of gentlemen discussed the merits of this or that wheeler or leader, till, reminded by the White Horse clock that time was up, they took a cursory glance at their way-bills, and, mounting their boxes, stole away to the accompaniment of "a yard of tin."

A well-loaded coach with a level team properly handled, is an object which inspires even the passing crowd with a thrill of pleasurable approbation, if not a tiny atom of envy. Whyte Melville contended that a lady could never look so well as in a riding-habit

and properly mounted. Other authorities incline to the fact that the exhilarating effect produced by riding upon a drag, coupled with the opportunity of social conversation and repartee, enhances, if possible, the charms of female attractiveness. Be this as it may, when the end of a journey is reached, the universal regret of the lady passengers is, not that the coachman has driven too quickly, but that the journey is not twice as long as it is. Interesting as the animated scene in Piccadilly during the summer months may be to those who have a taste for the road, there is another treat in store for the coaching man, afforded by a meet of the drags at the Magazine during the London season on special days, of which notice is given. We do not stop to inquire if the coach was built in Oxford Street, Park Street, Piccadilly, or Long Acre; whether the harness was made by Merry or Gibson; whether the team had

cost a thousand guineas or two hundred pounds, but we say that the display of the whole stands unequalled and unrivalled by the rest of the world. This unbounded admiration and approval do not at all deteriorate from the merits of the well-appointed four-horse coaches leaving Piccadilly every morning (Sundays excepted), as there is as much difference between a stage-coach and a four-in-hand as there is between a mirror and a mopstick.

Horses for a road-coach should have sufficient breeding to insure that courage and endurance which enable them to travel with ease to themselves at the pace required, and if they are all of one class, or, as old Jack Peer used to say, "all of a mind," the work is reduced to a minimum. Whereas, horses for the parade at the Magazine must stand sixteen hands; and, when bitted and beared up, should not see the ground they stand upon. They must

have action enough to kill them in a twelve-mile stage with a coach, even without a Shooter's Hill in it.

I do not say this in any spirit of disparagement of the magnificent animals provided by the London dealers at the prices which such animals ought to command.

I may here remind my patient reader that unless the greatest care and vigilance is exercised in driving these Magazine teams, it is three to one in favour of one horse, one showy impetuous favourite, doing all the work, whilst the other three are running behind their collars, because they dare not face their bits. It's a caution to a young coachman, and spoils all the pleasure of the drive. "He's a good match in size, colour, and action, but he pulls me off the box; I've tried a tight curb and nose-band, a high port, a gag, all in vain! If I keep him and he must pull, let him pull the

coach instead of my fingers; run a side-rein through his own harness-tenet to his partner's tug."

No amount of driving power or resin will prevent one "borer" from pulling the reins through your fingers. I hereby utterly condemn the use of anything of the sort. If your reins are new, they can be educated in the harness-room; but the rendering them sticky with composition entirely prevents the driver from exercising the "give and take" with the mouths of his team which is the key to good coachmanship. Let the back of the left hand be turned well down, the fingers erect; let the whip-hand act occasionally as a pedal does to a pianoforte, and, rely upon it, you are better without resin.

Whyte Melville, in his interesting work, "Riding Recollections," recites an anecdote, which I may be forgiven for quoting, as it combines both theory and instruction.

"A celebrated Mr. Maxse, celebrated some fifteen years ago for a fineness of hand that enabled him to cross Leicestershire with fewer falls than any other sportsman of fifteen stone who rode equally straight, used to display much comical impatience with the insensibility of his servants to this useful quality. He was once seen explaining to his coachman, with a silk handkerchief passed round a post. 'Pull at it,' says the master. 'Does it pull at you?' 'Yes, sir,' answered the servant, grinning. 'Slack it off then. Does it pull at you now?' 'No, sir.' 'Well then, you double-distilled fool, can't you see that your horses are like that post? If you don't pull at *them*, they won't pull at *you*.'"

A team, if carelessly driven for a few journeys, will soon forget their good manners, and begin to lean and bore upon a coachman's hands; and when the weight of one horse's

head (if he declines to carry it himself) is considered and multiplied by four, it will readily be believed that a coachman driving fifty or sixty miles daily will make it his study to reduce his own labour by getting his horses to go pleasantly and cheerfully together.

There are, of course, instances which defy all the science which can be brought to bear. Horses do not come to a coach because they are found too virtuous for other employment, and the fact of their being engaged with a blank character, or, at most, "has been in harness," does not inform the purchaser that they made firewood of the trap in their last situation.

I do not intend this remark to be defamatory of the whole of the horses working in the coaches of the revival. The average prices obtained at the sales at the end of the season prove the contrary. Many horses working in

the coaches of the present day have occupied very creditable places in the hunting-field, and, should they return thither, will be found none the worse for having been summered in a stage-coach.

Indeed, I am of opinion that this method of summering has considerable advantages over the system so often adopted, of first inflicting the greatest pain and punishment upon the animal by blistering all round, whether he requires it or not, and then sentencing him to five months' solitary confinement in a melancholy box or very limited yard.

In the first case, a horse doing a comparatively short stage, provided he is carefully driven, is always amused. His muscles and sinews are kept in action without being distressed, his diet is generous and sufficient without being inflammatory, and, though last not least, he is a constant source of pleasurable satisfaction to his owner, as well

as a means of bringing him to the notice of many sporting admirers, who may materially help the average in the autumn sale.

There is no doubt that horses, as a rule, enjoy coaching work, and many become good disciples to a ten-mile stage which could not be persuaded to do a stroke of work of any other description.

There are many exceptions to this rule. I have found in my own experience that, when hurriedly getting together twenty or thirty horses for coaching purposes, I have been fascinated by symmetry, and perhaps by small figures, and have bought an unprofitable horse. A visit to St. Martin's Lane, under such circumstances, once made me possessor of the very prettiest animal I almost ever saw—a red chestnut mare, a broad front, two full intelligent eyes, with a head which would have gone easily into a pint pot, ears well set on, a long lean neck, joining to such withers and shoulders as would have shamed a Derby

winner, legs and feet which defied unfavourable criticism. Here was a catch! And all this for eighteen guineas! Nothing said, nothing written; her face was her fortune, and I thought, mine too. She's too good for the coach; she ought to ride, to carry a lady; appears a perfect lamb. I could not resist what appeared to me an opportunity which everybody except myself seemed to neglect; I bowed to the gentleman in the box, who immediately dropped his hammer, saying: "For you!"

I overheard some remarks from the spectators which did not confirm my satisfaction at having invested in an animal without any character. "She knows her way here by herself;" "She won't have leather at any price," whispered another coper; but, as all evil reports are resorted to by the craft on such occasions, I did not heed them.

I soon found out that my new purchase was

not precisely a lamb. To mount her was impossible. She reared, bucked, kicked, plunged, and finally threw herself down; so that part of the business I gave up. I then began to put harness upon her. To this she submitted cheerfully, and, when she had stood in it for two days, I gammoned her into her place in the break, when, having planted herself, she declined to move one inch. The schoolmaster (break-horse) exercised all the patience and encouragement which such equine instructors know so well how to administer. He started the load, pulling very gently. He pulled a little across her, he backed a few inches, then leaned suddenly from her. All this being to no purpose, he tried coercion, and dragged her on, upon which, turning the whites of her innocent eyes up, she made one plunge and flung herself down. P

The schoolmaster looked at her reproachfully, but stood still as a mouse, in spite of



AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

her whole weight being upon his pole-chain, till she was freed.

She was too handsome to fight about on the stones, so I determined to try another dodge; and, putting a pair of wheelers behind her, and giving her a good free partner, I put her before the bars (near-side lead). Here the cross of the lamb in her was predominant, she went away, showing all the gentleness without even the skipping.

I took her immediately into the crowded streets, a system I have always found most successful with those horses which require distraction, and her behaviour was perfect. I was so well satisfied, that without further trial I sent her down the road to make one of a team from Sutton to Reigate, where she worked steadily, and remained an excellent leader for one week, when it seemed as if a sudden inspiration reminded her that the monotony of

the work, as well as the bars of the coach, should be broken by some flight of fancy. She made one tremendous jump into the air, as high as a swallow ordinarily flies in fine weather—which evolution cost me “a bar,” and after a few consecutive buck-jumps went quietly away. She did not confine her romps, however, to this comparatively harmless frolic, but contrived to land from these wonderful jumps among groups of Her Majesty’s subjects where she was least expected.

On one occasion I was coming away from a change at D——d, when, at the signal to go, she jumped from the middle of the road completely through the bay-window of a tailor’s shop, where several men were occupied on the board. At another time she was put to at S——n, where, the weather being oppressively hot, a party of yokels were regaling *al fresco* round a large table under the trees. Their

attention was naturally attracted to the coach during the change of horses, but little did they dream that in another minute one of the leaders would be on the table before them. So, however, it was. With one bound, scattering the pipes and pewters far and wide, she landed in the middle of the board.

I should have delighted in continuing my attempts to subdue the temper of this beautiful animal, especially as, once off, she made a superlatively good leader; but, where the public safety was jeopardised, I did not feel justified in further argument with the young lady, and therefore sold her to a stud company on the Continent.*

* This mare was in the English stud-book under the name of the "Lawyer's Daughter."

CHAPTER II.

Young coachmen—Save your horses—The ribbons—The whip
—A professional Jehu—An amateur—Paralysed fingers.

THO a man who has a taste for driving, what can be more fascinating than to find himself upon the box of his own drag, with four three-parts-bred, well-matched horses before him, of which he is master? But how is this supreme pleasure to be arrived at? He may give fabulous prices for his horses, his coach and appointments may be faultless, all selected with great judgment, and still there will be moments when aching arms, paralysed fingers, and animals who seem determined to go "no how," will compel him to

wish himself in any other position. In order to guard against this, I would enjoin a young beginner not to run away with the idea that because he has driven four horses without getting into trouble, or, as still more frequently occurs, because he can drive a tandem, he can be in any degree a match for a team of horses with spirit and mettle, unless he have first carefully mastered the rudiments of the ribbons. There are many self-taught men who are excellent coachmen, and who, from long habit and experience, may be as much at home, in cases of sudden difficulty, as some of the more educated; but they invariably lack a certain precautionary system which makes almost any team go well and comfortably, and reduces the chance of an accident to a minimum. There are, alas, very few preceptors of the old school, but why the present generation should not be as well able to instruct themselves as were the men of fifty years ago is to me an unexplained marvel.

It is quite true that when coaching was a most important business, and when the component parties—contractors, coachmen, horse-keepers, and horses—sprang into existence, apparently for the purpose of carrying it on, there was a professional caste about the whole affair which kept it distinct and separate from all others. A proprietor was a big man, and his importance was measured by the ground he covered. There was an emulative rivalry between these gentlemen, which reflected very healthily upon the style in which their coaches were done.

The contractor supplied such horses as the proprietor required to cover the ground at a given coaching price.

The coachman had to keep such time as was laid down by the rules of the coach, and this was a point upon which depended much of the merit of the man. A coachman who, from an

intimate knowledge of his ground, knew when to bustle and where to save his horses, was an invaluable acquisition to his employer. Horses themselves will sometimes suggest a little judicious springing, by which some of the most trying hills are more easily negotiated; but there is nothing better than to keep an even pace throughout the stage, jogging up all hills, easing them at the top, and coming steady off the crown of a descent. If circumstances should arise by which the time has been stolen from the horses, let me enjoin you, in the name of the whole equine race, not to attempt to make it up by showing your expertness with the whip up the hills; this is downright cruelty; and, in nine cases out of ten, the extra exertion and nervous efforts to respond are all made by one horse more sensitive than the rest of the team. It is better to wait for time than to race after it, the latter invariably resulting in one horse

being so much more baked than the others as to cause the knowing eyes around the White Horse Cellars to wink when you do arrive.

To make my reader comfortable with his team as quickly as possible, I would here offer a few hints, which I venture to think will be found valuable to all not too proud to learn.

Being, then, comfortably attired, taking care that no part of his clothing approaches to tightness, supplied with a good thick shoe and gaiter, an easy (very easy) dogskin glove, taking care that the fingers are not too long (he should always be provided with a pair of woollen gloves in case of wet weather), we may safely leave supplementary garments to his own taste.

Having looked round his horses—a proceeding which no coachman should neglect—he walks up to the flank of the off-wheeler and takes *all* his reins, which should have been doubled and tucked into the tug on the off-

side. Stepping back a pace, he separates his leading-reins, and pulls them through the ^{er}tenets till he has gathered up the slack. He then slips his wheel-reins on either side of his right hand middle-finger, the near-side leading-rein over the forefinger, and the other over the wheel-rein between the fore and middle fingers of his right hand.

If he changes his whip it will be laid across the cruppers of the wheelers, and must be taken up, caught, and placed in the same hand with the reins, so as to leave the left free to seize the step of the front-boot, when, by stepping on the fore-wheel, and throwing the weight of his body well before it, the walk up on the bench will be comparatively easy and graceful. Having arrived there, still keeping the whip and reins in the right hand, he quickly settles his seat and apron, then shifting his reins to his left hand, in the same order which they occupied

in the right, he proceeds to shorten them till he just feels the mouths of his horses.

The beauty and grace of a driving-seat is to assume such a posture as does not admit of any constraint. Without freedom of the wrist and arm, the whip, instead of being a most interesting plaything, will be a constant source of annoyance and difficulty to a young coachman. "It won't catch." "Why not?" Always because he will not let the bow of the thong swing sufficiently away from him, but tries it with a stiff arm. When once the knack is acquired it will last a lifetime, and there is no instrument the proper handling of which gives such a finish and proficiency, as a well-poised "yew" or a properly-weighted "holly." Often have I been obliged to give away old favourite "crops" because mine would "catch" and others would not.

A good coachman shows his proficiency as well by the manner of his getting up on the

bench as by the necessary preliminaries to make a comfortable start after he is seated. A lady, who must have been a close observer, once remarked to me that a certain gentleman, who was a mutual acquaintance, must be a very careful coachman, for, when riding upon the box-seat with him, he constantly asked her to hold the whip for him, while he went through a process of what appeared to her like "plaiting the reins." There is a right way and a wrong way, and, at the risk of being a trifle wearisome, I venture to introduce a few hints for the benefit of such of my young readers as may desire to be guided in the acquirements of an art at once useful and agreeable, by tracing some of the oldest habits of the profession, and thus, in coaching parlance, picking up some of the "dodges of the road."

Let us attempt to follow a professional "Jehu" over a stage or two of his ground.

His coach loaded and passengers placed, he

takes a careful look round to see that every part of his harness is in its place and properly adjusted, and, if reminded by seeing any particular horse that he had gone uncomfortably on his last journey, to endeavour to find out the cause and have it altered. I have known a horse, usually straight and pleasant in his work, all at once take to snatching the rein and run away wide of his partner, and this occasioned only by the winker-strap being too short, causing the winker to press against his frontal-bone, the apparently trifling irregularity causing so much pain as to drive him almost mad.

A wheeler sometimes takes to *diving* suddenly with his head, and almost snatching the rein out of the driver's hand. This can only be prevented by putting a bearing-rein upon him; and though this has often been censured (on the road), it has as often been condoned at the end of the stage. His inspection made, he

mounts his box, according to the foregoing rules, and having given some parting instructions to his horsekeeper—"Send 'Old Giles' down o' the off-side to-morrow, and rest the 'Betsy Mare,' etc. etc."—the office to start is given; when the lightest feel of their mouths (wheelers having a little the most room) and a "click" ought to be enough to start them.* Nothing is such "bad form" as to start with the whip; in dismissing which latter article I would caution young coachmen against the practice of carrying it in the socket. The moment when it may be required cannot be foreseen.

A well-organised team soon settles, and though for a mile or two they may appear to pull uncomfortably and not divide the work

* It is always desirable that the wheelers should start the load, as the leaders, if free starters, may jump into their work, and either spring a bar or bring the coach so suddenly on the wheel-horses that the trial may be too great for the weight of their heels.

evenly, this is often occasioned merely by freshness and impatience, when presently they will settle down and go like "oil."

A young friend, who lived not one hundred miles from Queen's Gate, once asked me to come and see a splendid team he had purchased. I was indeed struck by their appearance when they came to the door. All roans, sixteen-and-a-half hands, very well bred, decorated all over with crest and coronet. There was a small party for the drag, with, of course, some muslin on the box, and I took my place behind the driver. I very soon observed that, although they were very highly bitted, they were carrying too many guns for our coachman; and we had not proceeded far when I ventured to remark that he was going rather fast (at this moment three were cantering), and in reply my friend candidly declared "he could not hold them." "Then pull them all up at once," I said promptly,

“or they’ll be away with you.” Failing in this he accepted an offer of assistance, and, taking the reins, I, not without difficulty, stopped the runaways, and effected several alterations in their couplings, bittings, and harness.

I expected my friend would have resumed his post, but his hand was so paralysed that he could not grasp the reins. The explanation of this episode is twofold—firstly, the team was improperly put together; secondly, my friend discovered when we got to Richmond that he had been attempting to drive in a tight wristband, which, next to a tight glove, is of all things to be avoided. We had had unquestionably a narrow escape from what might have been a very serious accident. When four high-couraged horses, all very green and not properly strung together, get off “the balance” with a weak coachman, it is time to look out for a soft place. After I had made this team more

comfortable in their harness, and their mouths more easily reached by the coupling-reins, they became, in my hands, perfectly temperate and docile, and gave every promise of becoming a handy pleasant lot.

It is a dangerous thing for a young coachman to embark with a team without somebody with him who can relieve his paralysed fingers and wrists if occasion requires; and this danger is increased tenfold if the team is composed of high-mettled cattle unused to their work or their places. I have found it very useful to condition the muscles of the arm by dumb-belling or balancing a chair upon the middle-finger of the left hand with the arm extended.

I trust that the foregoing hints may not be received with disdain. How many men there are who, from mistaken self-sufficiency, go through a whole life in practising what must be very uncomfortable, merely because they have been

too proud to learn the A B C of the business. Without confidence—I may almost say without courage—no man can enjoy driving “a team.” He will be in a constant state of fret and in apprehension of all sorts of imaginary eventualities. The misgiving that they are either going too fast or not fast enough, not working straight, won’t stop the coach down hill, and a thousand other qualms, might all have been prevented by spending a few pounds at The Paxton.

CHAPTER III.

ANECDOTES.

Coachmen (friends and enemies)—Roadside burial—Old John's holiday—How the mail was robbed—Another method—A visit from a well-known character—A wild-beast attack—Carrier's fear of the supernatural—Classical teams—Early practice with the pickaxe—Catechism capsized.

IN the time when the only method of telegraphing was through the arms and legs of a wooden semaphore, and the only means of public locomotion the public high-road, competition for public favour carried opposition to the highest pitch, and the pace acquired by some of the fast coaches was extraordinary. When ten or fifteen minutes could be scored over the arrival of the opposition—if the “Telegraph” could

get in four or five minutes before the "Eclipse"—it was a subject of anxious comment until this state of things was reversed. Notwithstanding this, no class of men lived on better terms with each other than stage-coachmen off the bench. They were a class of men peculiar to themselves. The very fact of the trust reposed in them invested them with a superiority. Many coachmen in those days were educated men and had occupied higher positions in life; but in cases where the taste existed, and the talent could be acquired, although the work was extremely hard—exposure to every change of weather, the unflagging strain upon the attention, the grave responsibility incurred by the charge of so many lives—there was something so fascinating in the work, that there were few instances of their relinquishing the ribbons except from physical incapacity. This love of the business followed them through life—and even after death—as exemplified by the following anecdote.

An old coachman, who had driven the Norwich mail for thirty years of his life, became at last superannuated, and retired to his native village and repose. But to the last day of his life he prepared himself at the accustomed hour to take his usual seat, being at great pains to adjust his shawl and pull on his driving-gloves, then, taking his coat upon his arm and his whip in his hand, he would shuffle down the little gravel path to the garden-gate, to await the passing of the mail. He died at the good old age of eighty-six years; but not before he had expressed his desire to be buried at the corner of the churchyard abutting upon the highroad, in order that "he might hear the coach go by."

Another instance of the fascination of coach-driving is to be found in the case of "Old John," who drove a pair-horse coach from Exeter to Teignmouth and back daily, a distance of forty miles, for a period of eighteen years, without

missing a single day. At last, being half-teazed, half-joked by his fellow-whips into taking a holiday, he reluctantly consented to do so. Being much at a loss how to spend "a happy day," and enjoy his leisure to the full, he at length decided upon going to the coach-office and booking himself as a passenger on the opposition coach to Teignmouth and back. "Old John" (as he was called) never drove with lamps but once, and then he upset his coach. He always buckled his reins to the iron rail of the box before starting.

The guards of the old mails were always provided with spare gear in case of accidents, as well as a tool-chest; and—though last not least—an armoury consisting of one bell-mouthed blunderbuss—a formidable weapon, which, for an all-round shot would have been as effective as a mitrailleuse, both amongst friends and enemies—two large horse-pistols (ammunition to match), and a short dirky-looking sword.

There were many instances of the mails being robbed and plundered upon the road ; but the success was more attributable to intrigue and stratagem than to personal daring and courage.

The plan was this. An impediment is placed in the road by lacing cords across the track. The mail comes to a stop ; the horses are in confusion ; the guard steps down to render assistance, when one of the highwaymen immediately jumps up and secures the arms, and probably the bags, which were carried under the feet of the guard. Any attempt at resistance on the part of the guard is met by threats with his own arms. The coachman being rendered powerless by the traces having been cut, in many instances (the day having been carefully selected as one of those on which the bankers' parcel travelled) mail and cargo fell a rich and easy prey to the robbers.

Apart from the mails being selected by highwaymen as victims of plunder, they were frequently

used as co-operative vehicles in their iniquitous traffic.

On one occasion when the way-bill of the Dover mail bore the name of Miss —, two inside places had been booked three weeks in advance. At the hour of leaving the coach-office, two trunks covered and sewn up in the whitest linen, two dressing-cases, two carpet-bags, besides the smaller articles, baskets, reticules, wrappers, etc., had been duly stowed in the inside. Presently the growl of a King Charles, thrusting his head out of a muff, proclaimed the advent of another occupant of the two vacant seats. A gentlemanly-looking man, with fine open features, and what was at once written down by the old ladies as a charitable expression, much wrapped up with shawls, etc., round his neck, stepped into the mail.

He caressed, admired, and noticed Bess. He helped to adjust shawls, and placed the windows entirely at the disposal of the ladies, though he

looked as though he might be suffocated at any moment.

The conversation was animated; the stranger entering freely into all the views and opinions of his fellow-travellers—politics, agriculture, history—endorsing every opinion which they might express. Both inwardly pronounced him a most charming companion, and blessed the stars which had introduced them to such society.

“You reside in the neighbourhood of Charlton, madam?”

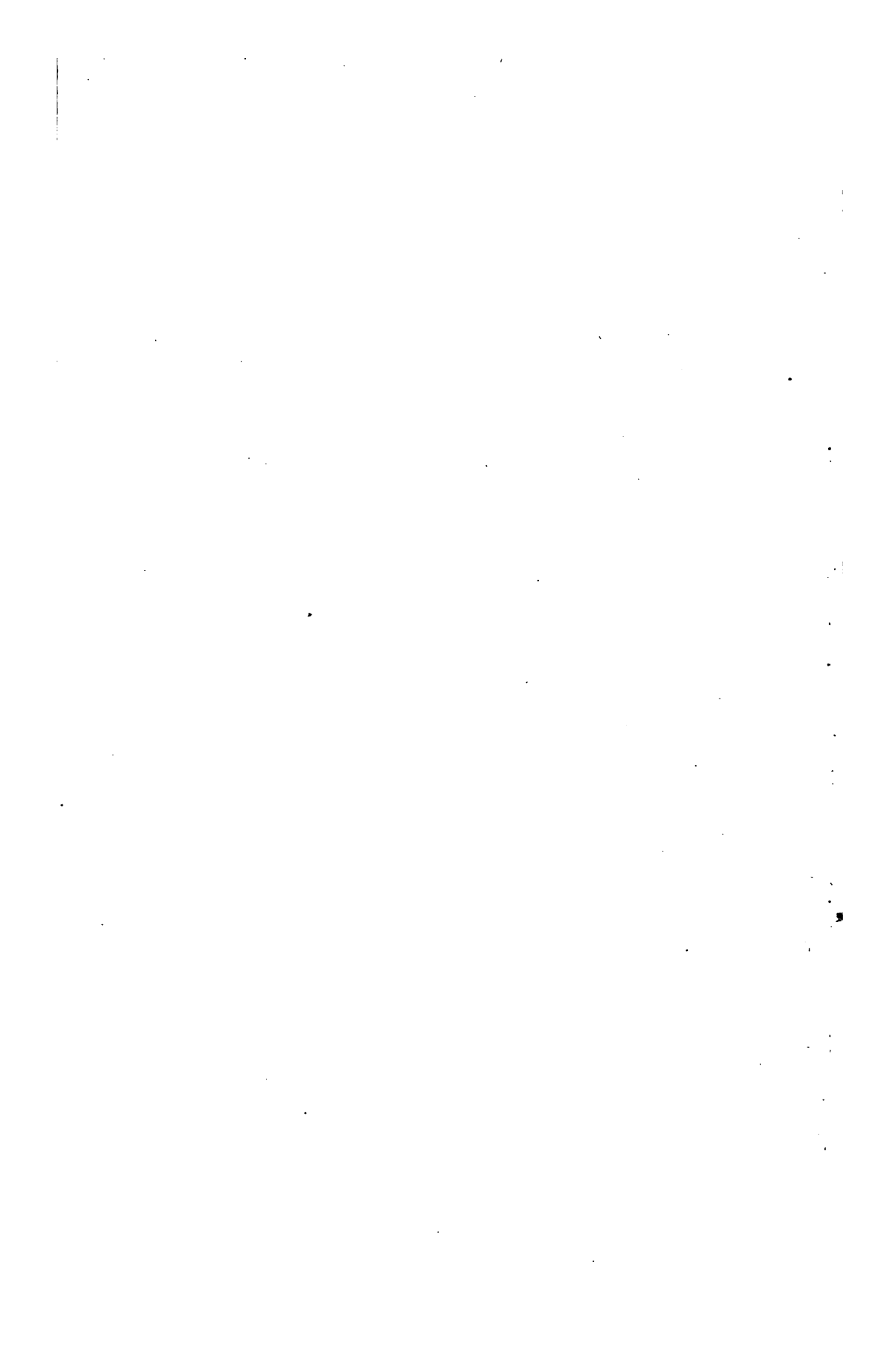
“Yes; we have a lovely villa on the edge of Blackheath.”

“Blackheath! that is a favourite neighbourhood of mine. In fact I am going to Woolwich to join my regiment this evening, and I intend to get out at Blackheath to enjoy an evening stroll over the Heath.”

“Are you not afraid of being molested at night over Blackheath? Isn't it very lonesome?”



**THE LIONESS ATTACKING
CARRIERS CART.**



"Sometimes it is lonesome, but I often meet very useful agreeable people in rambling over the Heath."

Arrived at Blackheath, the two ladies descended, and, feeling that they had established a sufficient acquaintance with the polite gentleman who had been their fellow-traveller, they invited him to partake of a cup of tea at their residence before proceeding on his journey, which invitation he gratefully accepted.

As the evening wore on, a rubber of whist was proposed, the gentleman taking "dummy."

After a short lapse of time, looking at his watch as by a sudden impulse, he observed that it was growing late, and he was afraid he was keeping them up.

"I shall now take my leave, deeply impressed by your kind hospitality ; but before I make my bow I must trouble you for your watches, chains, money, and any small articles of jewellery which you may have in the house."

The ladies looked aghast, hardly able to realise the situation. Their guest however remained inflexible, and having, with his own dexterous hands, cleared the tables of all articles sufficiently portable, was proceeding to ascend the stairs, when one of the ladies uttered a piercing scream. On this, he sternly assured them that silence was their only safety, whilst giving any alarm would be attended by instant death. Then, having possessed himself of all the money and valuables he could command, he left the house, telling the ladies with a smile, that they had conferred a most delightful and profitable evening on Mr. Richard Turpin.

There are instances on record of attacks of other descriptions upon the royal mails. History records the strange adventure of the Salisbury mail, on its journey from London to Exeter in the year —. Whilst passing the neighbourhood of Winterslow Hut, on Salisbury

Plain, the coachman's attention was attracted to what he at first thought was a huge calf cantering alongside of his leaders. The team at once became very fretful, and evinced such fear that the driver had some difficulty in keeping them in the road. Suddenly the creature he had mistaken for a calf made a lightning spring on to the back of one of the leaders, and swinging round so as to catch it by the throat, clung like a leech to the paralysed and terrified animal. The guard displayed great presence of mind, and taking his firearms with him, ran forward and delivered a *coup de grâce* to the attacking monster, which proved to be a lioness escaped from a travelling menagerie. This was her second exploit of the kind. She had previously pounced upon a horse drawing a carrier's cart, and killed, but not mutilated, the animal, the driver being far too much bewildered and alarmed to dream of resistance.

“A team well put together is half driven,” was an old and true adage, and of more certain application than many of the same character, as for example: “A bird well marked is half bagged.” Not a bit of it. The bird is awake, and, expecting to be flushed again, gets up much sooner than he is expected and flies awkwardly. “A bottle of physic well shaken is half taken.” I trust my readers have discovered this way of diminishing the dose.

In illustration of the first adage, I may mention that I had an innate love for driving, dating from so early a period as my keeping in my desk at school a well-matched team of cockchafers, until, finding them too slow for my work, I established in their place a very fashionable team of white mice, all bred on the premises. These when harnessed to a “Gradus” as a break were very safe and steady. With a Greek grammar or “Delectus” they could fly.

I inherited the love of driving from my father, who was a very good coachman; and in early days would frequently hang on a single leader to his carriage, making a "pickaxe" team, merely for the sake of initiating me in the manipulation of four reins. The promotion from donkies to ponies rather interrupted my practice; as, though we could always borrow mokes to make up a four-in-hand, it was not so easy to do so with ponies.

A real stage-coach passed our gates twice each day; and for the convenience of the contractor who horsed it, a stable was built upon my father's premises. The incentive given to me by the desire to get my dismissal from my tutor in time to see the coach change horses conduced more to my classical acquirements than any other circumstance.

The regularity of coach work is one of its greatest merits, and operates more upon the

well-conditioning of the men, horses, and all concerned, than is usually supposed.

It is a pretty sight to see a team of coach horses at a roadside change prepared and turned round, each one listening anxiously for the horn which proclaims the arrival of the coach, and the commencement for them of a ten-mile stage, which may have to be done perhaps in fifty-two minutes, with a heavy load, woolly roads, and the wind behind.

This does not sound like attraction to create much pleasurable impatience; but such is the fascination of coaching work that all horses, except, of course, those underbred vulgar screws which can take delight in nothing, whatever their antecedents may have been, become so moulded into their work and places (for this is a most important feature in my text) that it perfects them for the work expected of them in every particular. Bad tempers are subdued and become amiable;

bad feeders become after a time so ravenous as to be able to entertain a "duck in their mess;" nervous fretful horses become bold and settled. Old Crab, who persistently refused to drink out of a bucket when he came here, or even to allow a stable bucket to be brought near him, has overcome all his scruples, and, to use the horsekeeper's own words: "He wun't wait for his turn, but when the bucket is 'ung on to the nose of the pump he'll go and stick his old nose in it, and begin to neigh and 'oller like anything."

A coach horse, although he has apparently few opportunities of employing his intelligence to his own advantage, whose life is spent in the stable, except when taken to the forge, or to the horsepond, will evince to his employers, in spite of this monotony, some habits and tastes which, if he is indulged in them, will nearly double his value. For instance, every coach horse has

a favourite place in a team, and will go well and do well in that place; and by careful watching it will soon become evident to the coachman and to the horsekeeper which is the place selected by his taste.

Regard to this is most important. The same animal which becomes a "lawyer," because "he won't do no more than we pay him for," and is often forgotten at the near-side wheel, and is always coming back to you if put on the off-side, or, better still, before the bars, will be straight, steady, and cheerful in his work, with a mouth you might control with a thread.

This is when you have found out the place with which he is pleased and satisfied. Try him on the opposite side, and you will find him laying his whole weight upon the pole, his partner on your fingers.

"Everything in its place and a place for everything" was a maxim constantly preached by the

head-master of a certain public school, founded by one Sutton; and the proof of his theory was put to the test by a strange fancy he had taken. He was watching the evolutions of a small Carthusian army, under the command of a colour-sergeant of the Scots Guards, and observed that his first word of command was to "fall in" and "size." This was quickly done, and the effect so much tickled the doctor, that, on the following Sunday morning, when his catechism class was arranged before him, he thought it would be well to impress a little of the military element into the arrangement of the boys; so he requested the young gentlemen to take their places according to their sizes. Of course they were very obtuse, and could not for the life of them understand his order. Even when he placed them with his own hands, there was a deal of shuffling and confusion to get back to their old places. The doctor, however, had his

way, and M or N, who was a short, thick, rosy-cheeked boy, was supplanted by a tall, overgrown, sickly-looking youth of double his stature, and so on according to height, the lowest being in the centre. No. 2 agreed to his "godfather" and "godmother" having given the name of M or N to No. 1; but he could not tell why No. 3, when asked what his sponsors then did for him, preserved an obstinate silence, and, when much pressed, said they were both dead! In fact, arranged as the class then was, if the doctor had asked the questions in High Dutch and expected the answers in Hebrew, he would have got as much information; whereas, if they had kept their own places there would not have been a word in the answers omitted.

CHAPTER IV.

Opposition—A quick change—How to do it—Accident to the Yeovil mail—A gallop for our lives—Unconscious passengers—Western whips—Parliamentary obstruction.

LTHOUGH opposition was fierce, certain rules of etiquette and honour were most rigidly observed on the road, which rendered immunity from accidents much more general than would have been supposed. It was an understood thing that no coach should pass another actually in motion unless invited to do so by the coachman driving the leading coach at the time. The race became much more exciting in cases where there was a little diversity in the roads between two points in the destination.

The change in the fast coaches, where the horsekeeper and his mate knew their business, was effected in a minute and a half; and, like everything else connected with the fast coaches, required to be done strictly according to rule.

The man receiving the leader, near or off-side, seizes the rein behind the saddle or pad, and draws it out of the head-tenet of the wheeler, then, doubling it several times, he passes of it through the tenet, unhooks the coch-eyes the traces, and the leaders are free. Though still coupled they should be accustomed to walk aside a few paces, out of the way of the coach.

The horsekeeper at the heads of the wheelers should first double the rein through the tenet, to prevent its being trodden upon and cut; then, by raising the end of the pole, unhook the pole-chain, which will admit of the horse standing

back in his work, and enable the traces to be easily lifted off the roller-bolts, the wheelers being uncoupled before he leaves their heads.

The fresh team, when brought out, should be placed behind the spot where the coach pulls up, so that they may walk straight up into their places without having to be turned round, which always entails delay. The fresh team being "in-spanned," the coachman or guard (or both) assisting in running and buckling the reins, the business is complete.

However quickly the change may be effected, it behoves a coachman to look round before he takes his reins, as a very trifling omission may give rise to serious delay, if not dangerous trouble. I have known the most careful horsekeepers forget to couple the wheel-horses, which, especially in the dark, when it is more likely to happen, is an omission nothing but the greatest judgment and patience on the part of the coachman can

render harmless, since most coach-teams, more frequently than not, jump forward into their work, and are not so easily stopped.

It is in cases of this description that so many accidents are prevented, in the present day, by the use of that admirable invention the patent break. We are indebted to the French for this very useful appliance, and although many wheel-horses are spoiled by the too frequent use of it, the number of accidents and broken knees which are averted must be untold.

To pull up a heavily-loaded coach on a descent requires strength of arm, as well as power in the wheelers, to stop it; whereas, after having stopped the coach with a good strong break, the pulling up of the horses is comparatively easy. How different from the days when we had nothing but the old skid (or slipper) and chain, which was very little used except on the heavy coaches and over the most severe pitches,

on account of the loss of time occasioned by its adjustment and removal.

Accidents, however, are not always to be avoided by pulling-up, as I shall show by relating an incident which occurred to me many years ago in the West of England, in which nothing could have saved our limbs or necks but my having recourse to the opposite alternative, and keeping the team at the top of their speed for dear life.

I was indulging in my favourite pastime and driving the "Yeovil" mail. We were full inside, and there were two gentlemen besides the professional coachman, Jack Everett, outside. I had a little short-legged quick team, belonging to Mrs. Stevens, of the Halfmoon, from Crewkerne to Chard. They were accustomed to do this ground very fast, but would not stop an ounce down the hills.

The roads being hard and slippery, and,

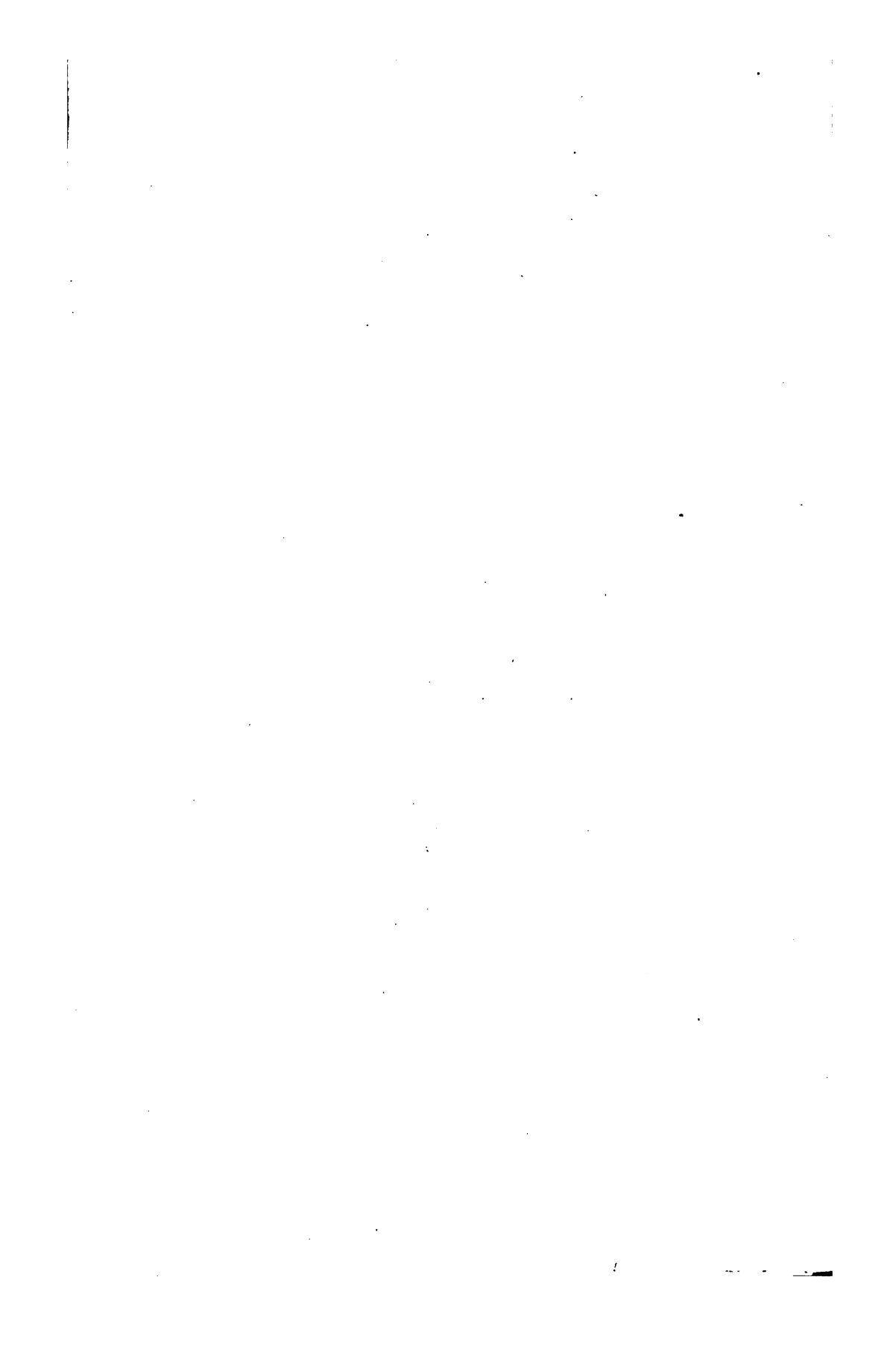
having a load, I took the precaution to put on the shoe to come down Chard Hill. We were swinging along merrily when suddenly the skid chain, in jumping over a stone, parted. This catastrophe allowed the coach to slip uncomfortably and suddenly upon the shoulders and cruppers of the wheelers, and one of them, being a bit of a rogue, evinced his disapprobation by giving several sudden bolting lurches and throwing himself upon the pole.

In one of these evolutions more sudden and violent than the rest the pole snapped off in the futchells!

Here was a predicament! Half-way down one of the ugliest hills in England, with a resolute frightened team and a broken pole. Nothing for it but to put them along and keep them galloping. The broken pole bobbing and dancing along at the end of the chains helped me materially to do this. The leaders finding the bars at the



THE "YEOVIL" MAIL.



end of the whippetree all gone mad, took the hint and went off as hard as they could lay legs to the ground. My only care was to keep them straight, and the pace so good as to prevent the coach getting upon the lock, in which case we must have gone over.

It was a fearful moment, and never in all my coaching experience have I passed through such a crisis.

"Let 'em have it!" cries Jack Everett.

"Nothing but the pace can save us!" cries Fred North, the guard.

She rocked, they galloped, we shouted to encourage them. Fortunately they were very evenly matched in pace. If there had been one shirk it must have been fatal.

Providence protected us on this occasion, and I had the good fortune to keep the pace up till we got upon a level, and then gradually stopped her, and, by way of a finale, we had a rattling

good kicking match before we could get the wheelers away from the coach.

I have been in many coach accidents, some of which, I regret to say, have been much more serious in their results, but I always consider that our lives were in greater jeopardy for the four or five minutes after that pole snapped than during any other epoch of my life.

Rarely, if ever, has there been a similar accident upon a plain open road. Poles are often snapped by inexperienced coachmen getting upon the lock in attempting to turn without room, and trusting to the strength of the pole to drag the coach across the road.

Not a hundred yards from the place where I pulled up the mail stood the yard and premises of a working wheelwright, who improvised, in a marvellously short time, a temporary pole, and by attaching the main-bar to a chain leading from the foot-bed, and splicing it to the pole, we did

not lose three-quarters of an hour by the whole *contretemps*. Moreover, strange to say, until the wheelers began trying to write their names on the front-boot at the bottom of the hill, the four inside passengers were perfectly unconscious that there had been anything wrong! One of the party—a lady—remarked to me that “the mail travelled so delightfully fast that it appeared to have wings instead of wheels.”

When the iron monster had invaded England, and the investment of the principal towns was nearly complete, the last corner which remained to the coaches was the far West, where the business was carried on with great energy and spirit to the very last.

Exeter became the great centre. About seventy coaches left the city daily, Sundays excepted—the “Dorchester” and “London,” the “Falmouth,” “Plymouth,” “Bath,” “Launceston,” and “Truro” mails. The “London” mail (direct), commonly

called the "Quicksilver," was said to be the fastest mail in England, performing the journey (one hundred and sixty-six miles) in twenty hours, except during fogs or heavy snow. This mail was driven out of London by Charles Ward (now the proprietor of the Paxton Yard, Knightsbridge), who left the White Horse Cellars (now the Bath Hotel), Piccadilly, at eight every evening, until Mr. Chaplin shifted his booking office to the Regent Circus.

The numerous coaches working between Exeter and the west coast were principally horsed by Cockrane, New London Inn ; Pratt, Old London (now the Bride), and Stevens, Halfmoon Hotel.

The day and night travelling was kept up until fairly driven off by the common enemy.

During the two or three years before the railway was opened this part of England became the warm corner for coaching ; and all the talent of the road, having been elbowed out of other

places, flocked to the West. Charles and Henry Ward, Tim Carter, Jack Everett, Bill Harbridge, Bill Williams, and Wood, not forgetting Jack Goodwin, the guard, who was one of the best key-buglers that ever rode behind a coach.

This incursion of talent aroused the energies of some of the Devonshire whips engaged at that time, M. Hervey, Sam Granville, Harry Gillard, Paul Collyns, William Skinner, etc.

There were four Johnsons, all first-class coachmen, sons of a tailor at Marlborough, who were working up to the last days of coaching. Anthony Deane—or Gentleman Deane, as he was commonly called—drove the only mail left after the opening of the rail to Plymouth—the “Cornish” mail to Launceston.

After she was taken off the road he did not long survive, but died at Okehampton. He was a fine coachman, a good nurse, and an admirable timekeeper.

The "Telegraph," when first put on by Stevens of the Halfmoon, left Exeter at 6.30 A.M., breakfasted at Ilminster, dined at the Star at Andover, and reached Hyde Park Corner at 9.30 P.M., thus performing a journey of one hundred and sixty-six miles in fifteen hours, including stoppages. There was some encouragement to coaching in those days. A good mail was a real good property. The "Quick-silver" mail and the "Dorchester" mail, alone, paid the rent (twelve hundred pounds per annum) of the New London Inn. The profits of the former were a thousand pounds per annum; and those of the "Dorchester" two hundred pounds; the profits of the first-named being augmented by the fact of the booking office, both ways, being at Exeter. The mails from London on the second of each month were always a little behind time, being so heavily laden with the magazines and periodicals.

In spite of the tremendous pace at which the mails travelled, accidents were very rare. All coaches were heavily laden about Christmas time with parcels and presents. On one occasion, the "Defiance" from Exeter, with an unreasonable top-load, was overtaken by a dense fog, and the coachman (Beavis), getting off the road before he got to Ilminster, was upset and the driver killed upon the spot. An eminent friend and patron of the road, Mr. E. A. Sanders, took the matter in hand, and collected upwards of eight hundred pounds for the widow and children, with which, as the latter grew up, he started them all in life.

There were many fast coaches besides the ordinary six-insider, such as the "Balloon" and "Traveller," from Pratt's, New London, the "Defiance," a fast coach, from the Clarence Hotel, Congleton, the "Favourite" (subscription), and several others.

In the year 1835, all the Exeter and London

coaches were stopped by heavy snow, at Mere, on the borders of Salisbury Plain. Amongst the passengers were the late Earl of Devon, the Bishop of Exeter, Mr. Charles Buller, and seven other members of Parliament, all on their way to attend the opening of the session. They were delayed a whole week.

As the London coaches were gradually knocked off by the advance of the rail, the competition upon other roads out of Exeter became more rife, and the opposition warmer.

CHAPTER V.

The "Warwick Crown Prince"—"Spicy Jack"—Poor old Lal!—
"Go it, you cripples!"—A model horsekeeper—The coach
dines here—Coroner's inquest—The haunted glen—Lal's
funeral.

HE coach which I have selected by
way of exemplifying my remarks was
the "Warwick Crown Prince," and,
at the time I adopted it, was driven by Jack
Everett, who was reckoned in his day to be
as good a nurse, and to have fingers as fine,
as anybody in the profession.

He took the coach from The Swan with
Two Necks, in Ladd Lane, to Dunstable, and
there split the work with young Johnson, who,

though sixty years of age, had three older brothers on the bench. "Spicy Jack" was the beau ideal of a sporting whip. He was always dressed to the letter, though his personal appearance had been very much marred by two coach accidents, in each of which he fractured a leg. The first one having been hurriedly set a little on the bow, he wished to have the other arranged as much like it as possible; the result being that they grew very much in the form of a horse-collar. These "crook'd legs," as he called them, reduced his stature to about five feet three inches. He had a clean-shaved face, short black hair, sharp intelligent blue eyes, a very florid complexion, rather portly frame, clad in the taste of the period: A blue coat, buttons very widely apart over the region of the kidneys, looking as if they had taken their places to fight a duel, rather than belonging to the same coat. A

large kersey vest of a horsecloth pattern ; a startling blue fogle and breast-pin ; drab overalls, tightly fitted to the ankle and instep of a Wellington boot, strapped under the foot with a very narrow tan-coloured strap. The whole surmounted by a drab, napless hat, with rather a brim, producing a "slap-up" effect.

When at the local race-meetings, "Spicy Jack" dashed on to the course in a sporting yellow mail phaeton, his whip perpendicular, his left hand holding the reins just opposite the third button of his waistcoat from the top. Driving a pair of "tits" which, though they had both chipped their knees against their front teeth, and one of them (a white one) worked in suspicious boots, produced such an impression upon the yokels that no one but "Spicy Jack" could come on to a racecourse in such form.*

* Silver-mounted harness, with red morocco collars.

All this appeared like "cheek," but it was quite the reverse; for in spite of the familiarity which was universally extended to this "sporting whip," he never forgot his place with a gentleman, and a more respectful man in his avocation did not exist.

"Well, Jack, what are we backing?" was the salutation of a noble lord who had given him a fiver to invest to the best of his judgment.

"Nothing, my lord; we are not in the robbery."

"How's that? we shall lose a race."

"Well, you see, my lord, it was all squared and the plunder divided before I could get on."

Nobody knew the ropes at Harpenden, Barnet, and St. Albans, when the platers ran to amuse the public, and the public "greased the ropes," better than the waggoner of the "Crown Prince."

This is a rest day and the "spare man" works. Let us take a full load away from Ladd Lane.

Ten and four with all their luggage ; roof piled, boots chock full, besides a few candle-boxes in the cellar.* She groans and creaks her way through the city, carefully, yet boldly driven by our artist, and when she leaves her London team at the Hyde and emerges into an open road, she steals away at her natural pace, which, from the evenness of its character, is very hard to beat.

There was one coach, and only one, which could give these fast stage-coaches ten minutes and beat them over a twelve-mile stage !

It was before the legislature forbade the use of dogs as animals of draught, that there dwelt upon the Great North Road, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, an old pauper who was born without legs, and, being of a sporting turn of mind, had contrived to get built for himself a small simple carriage, or waggon, very light, having

* Heavy road parcels were frequently stowed underneath the coach upon a swinging shelf, called "the cellar."

nothing but a board for the body, but fitted with springs, lamps, and all necessary appliances.

To this cart he harnessed four fox-hounds, though to perform his quickest time he preferred three abreast. He carried nothing, and lived upon the alms of the passengers by the coaches. His team were cleverly harnessed and well matched in size and pace. His speed was terrific, and as he shot by a coach going ten or twelve miles an hour, he would give a slight cheer of encouragement to his team; but this was done in no spirit of insolence or defiance, merely to urge the hounds to their pace. Arriving at the end of the stage, the passengers would find poor "Old Lal" hopping on his hands to the door of the hostelry, whilst his team, having walked out into the road, would throw themselves down to rest and recover their wind. For many years poor Old Lal continued his amateur competition with some of the fastest and best-appointed coaches on the road; his

favourite ground being upon the North Road, between the Peacock at Islington and the Sugar-loaf at Dunstable. The latter place was his favourite haven of rest. He had selected it in consequence of a friendship he had formed with one Daniel Sleigh, a double-ground horsekeeper, and the only human being who was in any way enlightened as to the worldly affairs of this poor legless beggar.

Daniel Sleigh, as the sequel will prove, richly deserved the confidence so unreservedly placed in him—a confidence far exceeding the mutual sympathies of ordinary friendship; and Daniel Sleigh became Old Lal's banker, sworn to secrecy.

Years went on, during which the glossy coats of Lal's team on a bright December morning—to say nothing of their condition—would have humbled the pride of some of the crack kennel huntsmen of the shires. When asked how he fed his hounds, he was wont to say: "I never

feed them at all. They know all the hog-tubs down the road, and it is hard if they can't satisfy themselves with somebody else's leavings." Where they slept was another affair; but it would seem that they went out foraging in couples, as Old Lal declared that there were always two on duty with the waggon.*

When the poor old man required the use of his hands, it was a matter of some difficulty to keep his perpendicular, his nether being shaped like the fag-end of a farthing rushlight; and he was constantly propped up against a wall to polish the brass fittings of his harness. In this particular his turnout did him infinite credit. Of course his most intimate, and indeed only friend, Dan Sleigh, supplied him with oil and rotten-stone when he quartered at Dunstable; and brass, when once cleaned and kept in daily use, does not require much elbow-grease. Lal's

* Possibly tied to it.

travelling attire was simplicity itself. His wardrobe consisted of nothing but waistcoats, and these garments, having no peg whereon to hang except the poor old man's shoulders, he usually wore five or six, of various hues; the whole topped by a long scarlet livery waistcoat. These, with a spotted shawl round his neck, and an old velvet hunting-cap upon his head, completed his costume.

The seat of Lal's waggon was like an inverted beehive. It would have puzzled a man with legs to be the companion of his daily journeys. These generally consisted of an eight-mile stage and back, or, more frequently, two consecutive stages of eight and ten miles.

An interval of several years elapsed, during which I did not visit the Great North Road. When at length I did so, I hastened to inquire for my old friends, many of whom I found had disappeared from the scene—coachmen changed,

retired, or dead ; horsekeepers whom I had known from my boyhood, shifted, discharged, or dead.

Under any other circumstances than driving a coach rapidly through the air of a fine brisk autumnal morning, at the rate of eleven miles an hour, including stoppages, the answers to my inquiries would have been most depressing.

Dunstable was the extent of my work for that day, which afforded me the opportunity of working back on the following morning.

Arrived at The Sugarloaf, gradually slackening my pace and unbuckling my reins, I pulled up within an inch of the place whence I had so often watched every minute particular in the actions of the finished professionals.

D—— was the place at which the coach dined, and, being somewhat sharp set, I determined to dine with the coach, though I should have to spend the evening in one of the dullest provincial towns in England.

I had brought a full load down. The coaches dined in those days upon the fat of the land. Always one hot joint (if not two) awaited the arrival of the coach, and the twenty minutes allotted for the refreshment of the inward passenger were thoroughly utilised.

A boiled round of beef, a roast loin of pork, a roast aitchbone of beef, and a boiled hand of pork with peas-pudding and parsnips, a roast goose and a boiled leg of mutton, frequently composed a *menu* well calculated to amuse a hungry passenger for the short space allotted him.

The repast concluded and the coach re-loaded, I watched her ascend the hill at a steady jog till she became a mere black spot in the road. I then directed my steps to the bottom of the long range of red-brick buildings used as coach-stables, where I found old Daniel Sleigh still busily engaged in what he called "Setting his 'osses fair."

This implied the washing legs, drying flanks, and rubbing heads and ears of the team I had brought in half-an-hour ago. Although the old man looked after the "in-and-out" horses, he always designated the last arrival as "My 'osses," and they consequently enjoyed the largest share of Dan's attention: "Bill the Brewer," "Betsy Mare," "Old Giles," and "The Doctor."

Dan Sleigh was a specimen of the old-fashioned horsekeeper, a race which has now become obsolete. He had lived with Mrs. Nelson, who was one of the largest coach proprietors of the period, for thirty-nine years, always having charge of a double team. He rarely conversed with anybody but "his 'osses," with whom, between the h—i—ss—e—s which accompanied every action of his life, he carried on a *sotto voce* conversation, asking questions as to what they did with them, at the other

end, and agreeing with himself as to the iniquitous system of taking them out of the coach and riding them into the horsepond, then leaving them to dry whilst Ben Ball—the other horsekeeper—went round to the tap to have half-a-pint of beer. *O tempora! O mores!*

Many of his old friends had fallen victims to this cruel treatment. A recent case had occurred in the death of old Blind Sal, who had worked over the same ground for thirteen years, and never required a hand put to her, either from the stable to the coach or from the coach to the stable. She caught a chill in the horsepond, and died of acute inflammation.

When I interrupted old Dan he was just “hissing” out his final touches, and beginning to sponge the dirt off his harness. He recognised me with a smile—a shilling smile—and the following dialogue ensued.

Daniel Sleigh was a man who, to use his own words, "kep' 'isself to 'isself." He never went to "no public 'ouses, nor yet no churches." He had never altered his time of getting up or going to bed for forty years; and, except when he lay in the "horsepital" six weeks, through a kick from a young horse, he had never been beyond the smithy for eleven years. In any other grade of life he would have been a "recluse."

His personal appearance was not engaging—high cheek-bones, small gray sunken eyes, a large mouth, and long wiry neck, with broad shoulders, a little curved by the *anno domini*; clothed always in one style, namely, a long plush vest, which might have been blue once; a pair of drab nethers, well veneered with blacking and harness paste; from which was suspended a pair of black leather leggings, meeting some thin ankle-jacks. This, with a no-coloured string, which had once been a necktie, and a catskin cap, completed

his attire. My attention had been attracted to an old hound—a fox-hound—reclining at full length on his side on the pathway leading to the stables, his slumbers broken by sudden jerks of his body and twitches of his limbs, accompanied by almost inaudible little screams; leading me to suppose that this poor old hound was reviewing in his slumbers some of the scenes of his early life, and dreaming of bygone November days when he had taken part in the pursuit of some good straight-necked fox in the Oakley or the Grafton country.

“What is that hound?” I asked. “He looks like one of poor Old Lal’s team.”

“Ah, that’s the *last* on ’em. They are all gone now but poor old Trojan, and he gets very weak and old.”

When I noticed him he slowly rose, and sauntered across the yard towards a large open coachhouse, used as a receptacle for hearses and

mourning-coaches. He did not respond to my advances, except by standing still and looking me in the face with the most woe-begone expression possible, his deep brow almost concealing his red eyes. He was very poor, his long staring coat barely covering his protruding hips and ribs. There he stood, motionless, as if listening intently to the sad tale Daniel Sleight was graphically relating.

“And what has become of poor Old Lal?” I asked.

“Oh, he’s left this two years or more.”

“Whither is he gone?”

“I don’t know as he’s gone anywheres; they took him up to the churchyard to be left till called for. You see, sir, he never ’ad no kins nor directors (executors), or anybody as cared whether they ever see him again or not. He was an honest man though a wagrant; which he never robbed nobody, nor ever had any parish relief.

What money he had I used to take care of for him; and when he went away he had a matter of sixteen pounds twelve and twopence, which I kep' for him, only as he wanted now and again tenpence or a shilling to give a treat to his hounds."

"Where did he die?"

"Ah, that's what nobody knows nothing about. You see, sir, it was as this: He'd been on the road a-many years; but as he had no house in particular, nobody noticed when he came and when he went; when he laid here o' nights, he used to sleep in the hay-house. The boys in the town would come down and harness up his team and set him fair for the day. He would go away with one of the up-coaches, and not be here again for a week (perhaps more). Well, there was one time, it was two years ago last March, I hadn't seen nothing of Lal not for three weeks or a month; the weather was terrible rough, there was snow and hicc; and the storm blowed down a-many

big trees, and them as stood used to 'oller and grunt up in the Pine Bottom, so that I've heerd folks say that the fir-trees a-rubbing themselves against one another, made noises a nights like a pack of hounds howling; and people were afraid to go down the Pine Bottom for weeks, and are now, for a matter of that. For they do say as poor Old Lal drives down there very often in the winter nights. Well, one Sunday afternoon I had just four-o'clocked my 'osses, and was a-popping a sack over my shoulders to go down to my cottage; it was sleeting and raining, and piercing cold, when who should I meet but poor old Trojan. He come up, rubbed my hand with his nose, and seemed quite silly with pleasure at seeing me. Now, though I've known him on and off this five or six year, I never knew him do the like before. He had a part of his harness on, which set me a thinking that he had cut and run, and perhaps left Old Lal in trouble.

“You see, sir, what a quiet sullen dog he is. Always like that, never moves hisself quickly. Still, when he come to me that Sunday, he was quite different; he kep’ trotting along the road, and stopping a bit, then he’d look round, then come and lay hold of the sack and lead me along by it.

“The next day there was another of poor Old Lal’s team come to our place (Rocket), and he had part of his breast-collar fastened to him. They were both pretty nigh starved to death. Trojan he went on with these manœuvres, always trying to ’tice me down to the road leading to the Pine Bottom. Word was sent up and down the road by the guards and coachmen to inquire where Old Lal had been last seen. No tidings could be got, and strange tales got abroad. Some said the hounds had killed and eaten him! Some that he had been robbed and murdered! No tidings could be got. Still old Trojan seemed

always to point the same way, and would look pleased and excited if I would only go a little way down the road towards the Pine Bottom with him.

“Many men joined together and agreed to make a search, but nothing could be found in connection with the poor old man; so they gave it up. One morning after my coach had gone, I determined to follow old Trojan. The poor old dog was overjoyed, and led me right down to the Pine Bottom. I followed him pretty near a mile through the trees and that, until at last we come upon poor Old Lal’s waggon. There was his seat, there was part of the harness, and there lay, stone-dead, one of the hounds.

“No trace could be found of the poor old man, and folks were more puzzled than ever about his whereabouts.

“It seemed as though the waggon had got set fast between the trees, and Trojan and Rocket

had bitten themselves free, the third, a light-coloured one (a yellow one), had died.

"The finding of the waggon set all the country up to search for poor Old Lal, but it wasn't for more'n a week after finding the waggon, that Trojan and Rocket pointed out by their action where to go and look for the poor old man. And he was found, but it was a long ways off from his waggon. There he lay, quite comfortable, by the side of a bank. The crowner said the hounds had given chase to something (maybe a fox crossed 'em) and dashed off the road, throw'd the poor old man off—perhaps stunned with the fall—and the hounds had persevered through the wood till the waggon got locked up in the trees. And there the poor things lay and would have died if they had not gnawed themselves out of their harness."

"And what was the verdict?"

"Oh, there was no verdic'! They never found that."

"There must have been some opinion given."

"Jury said he was a pauper wagrant, that he had committed accidental death, and the crowner sentenced him to be buried in the parish in which he was last seen alive."

"Had he any friends or relatives?"

"No; he said he never had any. He had no name, only Lal. Old Trojan has been with me ever since we followed a short square box up to the churchyard, containing the body of poor Old Lal, where we left it. There was nobody attended the funeral only we two. If the old dog ever wanders away for a day or two, he allers comes back more gloomier like than he looks now."

The old hound had been standing in the same attitude, apparently a most attentive listener to this sad tale, and when I attempted a pat of sympathy he turned round and threaded his way through the crowd of mourning-coaches; and

Daniel Sleigh informed me that the wreck of poor Old Lal's waggon had been stowed away at the back of this melancholy group. Upon this the old hound usually lay.

"And what about Rocket?"

"He was a younger and more ramblier dog. He never settled nowhere. The last I heard of him, he had joined a pack of harriers (a trencher pack) at Luton. He was kinder master of them, frequently collecting the whole pack and going a-hunting with them by hisself. He was allers wonderful fond of sport. I mind one time when a lot of boys had bolted a hotter just above the mill, and was a-hunting him with all manner of dogs, Old Lal happened to come along with his waggon. The whole team bolted down to the water's edge, and just at that moment the hotter gave them a view. The hue-gaze* was too much

* Corresponding with Tally-ho in fox-hunting, to announce a view.

for Rocket. He plunged in, taking with him the waggon and the other two hounds. Poor Old Lal bobbed up and down like a fishing-float, always keeping his head up, though before he could be poked out he was as nigh drowned as possible. And this is what makes me think Rocket was the instigator of the poor old man's death. He must have caught a view of a fox, perhaps, or, at any rate, have crossed a line of scent, and bolted off the road and up through the wood, and after they had throwed the poor old man, continued the chase till the waggon got hung fast to a tree and tied them all up."

"Was there any wound or fracture about poor Old Lal's body which might have caused his death?"

"None whatever ; no mark, no sign of violence which could have caused his death. They do say

he is often heerd 'ollering for help o' nights since he has been buried. There's a-many people won't go through the Pine Bottom after dark to save their lives."

CHAPTER VI.

Commercial-room—The bagman's tale—Yes—Strange company.

WHEN driving the coaches in the olden time, it frequently happened that I remained for the night at the stage from which I should take the coach back on the following day. On one of these occasions I accidentally spent the evening in the commercial-room at ———. I say "accidentally," because in all provincial hotels the bagman's room is considered sacred to commercial travellers, and I have been informed by landlords that any intrusion upon them would prove dangerous to the house's popularity. I

had dined early, and, unaware of the trespass, happened to look into a long, dreary, deserted room, with "Coffee-room" written upon the door; a stale number of "The Illustrated News" and a well-thumbed Post Office Directory upon the table; a very bad fire, and altogether the air of a methodist meeting-house on a week-day. I turned to another room, in which were three or four gentlemen, who appeared to be surrounded by every comfort; coats, hats, wrappers, hung in clusters against the wall, and a cheerful fire.

A stout round-faced man, much marked by smallpox, dressed in a suit of tweed dittos, with an elaborate pin in his necktie resembling the dial of a good-sized watch, appeared to be the senior officer or "boss" of the party, as much in manner and bearing as he was in size. Addressing a small-featured, light-haired, thin young man, dressed in black-silk waist-

coat, he said in a stentorian voice: "Have you done floating here, Mr. Ruffins?"

"No, Mr. Staines; I've not done yet. I've quoted twice. My people won't let me sink."

A third party, an older man, attired in gray, with hair to match, was busily engaged at one end of the room packing a quantity of small cases into a larger one, and continuing to hold converse with himself by means of the monosyllable "yes," differently intonated, at intervals of half-a-minute, "y-e-s—y-e-s."

Having finished his packing, he advanced slowly towards me, and, scanning me from head to foot, resumed his affirmative expression, but at longer intervals.

"Been round this way before—y-e-s? Bulk or samples—yes?"

In answer to his first question I informed him that I was no stranger to the place, to which he replied: "Yes."

Desks were now locked and stowed away. The table having been cleared, the stout man advanced, stirred the fire, and rang the bell.

“Give your orders, gents. I am going to stand glasses round, for a slice of luck I’ve experienced to-day. *I* call it luck, though it was no more than common honesty. But I was lucky in meeting an honest man instead of a rogue. When I was on this circuit six months ago I was settling a small account with one of my clients, taking a receipt for the amount, four pounds seventeen shillings. I inadvertently handed him a cheque for seventeen pounds, saying to the clerk to whom I paid it: ‘You may keep the balance.’ The other cheque having been paid in due course, I was quite ignorant of the error I had made; until, on meeting the party to whom I paid it, in the street this morning, although now thrown out of employ, he handed me twelve pounds three shillings, the balance of my cheque,

which I thought had been drawn for five pounds."

"One bottom of brandy and two whiskies, with hot water."

"Draw round to the fire, sir," he continued. "Though we have not met before we may often meet again. We travellers do run against each other in strange ways." (Here the gray old man groaned out another "Y-e-s.") "The commercial interest of this great country is entirely in our hands, and if we don't take care of ourselves it is our own fault."

The smoking tumblers having been supplied, and the party seated round the fire, the conversation became gradually more brisk, chiefly led by the man in gray, whose opinion on all points seemed absolute.

I was a tacit listener, understanding very little of that part of the conversation which related to business, viz.: "Quoting 7-18ths at 223 and

sliding 347 and 19 net ;" but at length anecdotes and experience took the place of business, and proved intensely amusing.

I should have enjoyed the occasion if I could have divested myself of the idea that, as regards my vocation, I was an impostor, with no right to be there.

It was evident that the gray man of the "yes" had his suspicions as to my not being a member of the craft.

Many glances he directed at me, each accompanied by a muttered "yes." All doubts upon the subject were at length dispelled by a question from the little man in the black-silk waistcoat, Mr. Ruffins, who abruptly inquired :

"What is your route from here? Who are your clients?"

"I am not here," I replied, "on any particular business, and, to own the truth, gentlemen, I doubt if I have any in this room."

"Excuse me, sir, did I not see you on the coach this morning?"

"I came by the coach, and shall return with it to-morrow."

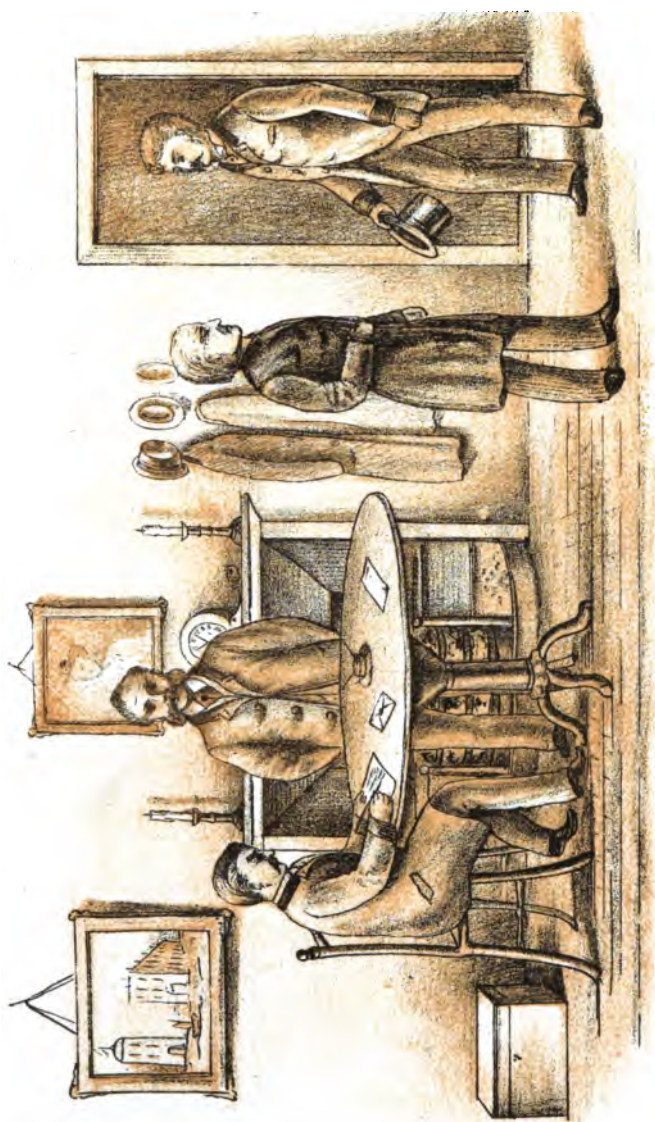
"Then we shall be fellow-travellers. I leave my trap here, and return to —— by the coach."

The gray man now commenced an anecdote, which I shall give in his own words.

"It was in the winter of 1855. I was on the northern circuit, in the midst of a terrific snowfall which buried everything.

"At dusk one evening the wind rose and caused the snow to drift in heaps so quickly that I lost the road. My horse became frightened, and I could scarcely induce him to proceed. I did, however, force him on till I came to a small roadside inn, at which the mail changed.

"Here I determined to leave my horse and trap and proceed by the coach. It was a fearful



"THE COMMERCIAL ROOM?" "YES."

night, snow falling thickly, icy cold, and the roads almost impassable. The mail was three hours late, and when it did arrive there was question of the advisability of proceeding farther. I found at the inn a traveller who was storm-staid, and, whilst waiting in the bar-parlour for the arrival of the mail, displayed the most marked impatience, constantly breaking out into ejaculations.

“‘Oh dear, oh dear! what a disappointment! But if I can’t get there I can’t. Never was late before—such a lot of people too.’

“I tried in vain to reconcile him to the delay. He could do nothing but lament the accident which seemed likely to prevent his keeping his appointment at Durham on the following day.

“As we became more intimate I consoled with him, hinting that such anxiety led me to fear that it was a matter of life and death.

“‘It is a matter of life and death,’ he exclaimed. ‘If I can’t get there in time, I shall be ready to hang myself.’

“Time wore on, The mail at length drew up, making that peculiar squeaking noise through the deep snow which indicates the heaviest draught for the horses, which were sobbing and sweating, the wet pouring in streams from their sides; the delay having been caused by the coach having got into a drift, from which it had been with difficulty extricated by a plough-team.

“The change being effected, we took our places inside, and, travelling under great difficulty, we jogged on; the guard occasionally getting down to feel for the road with a stick.

“I sympathised with my fellow-traveller, and encouraged him by expressing my conviction that we should arrive at Durham at four A.M., instead of the usual hour, eleven P.M.; but it proved difficult to reconcile him even to this delay.

"Thus we passed hour after hour; the wheels of the mail groaning and squeaking through the drifted snow, and the horses frequently brought to a walk. By dint of perseverance, however, and the pluck of the coachman, we did arrive at Durham at half-past four A.M., five hours late. When we alighted at the Crown I was surprised to find that my fellow-traveller appeared to excite in the night-porter a sneer of disgust. Turning his whole attention to *my* luggage, he allowed the man to snatch up his own valise and depart.

"'Nice company you've got into,' growled boots.

"'Doesn't he stop here?' I asked.

"'Thank you, we don't accommodate gentlemen of *his* profession. They make room for him when they want him at the county gaol.'

"'Who and what is he?'

"'Why, don't you know him? That's the hang-man; and he brings that there trunk with him

to take away his perquisites, which is the wearing apparel of the poor wretch he's a-going to swing off at eight o'clock this morning; and the mail being so late, he has only just saved his bacon this journey.'"

Having finished his tale, the gray man looked hard at me, and again uttered his favourite "Y-e-s," which this time I was half inclined to interpret into a warning to his friend that, whilst encouraging outsiders in the bagman's room, they might be entertaining an executioner unawares.

Travelling by public conveyances naturally leads to strange rencounters. It has often happened that wealth has been acquired, lost friends restored, estates bought and sold, etc., entirely through accidental meetings on the road. Men without heirs have been known in many instances to adopt a fellow-traveller, either from the fact of finding a person possessing the same name, or

from some trifling civility or sacrifice being made in their favour by a stranger during a long and perhaps irksome journey.

There is no doubt people became acquainted, as a general rule, and shook off the rigid forms of etiquette—so essentially English—much more readily during the days of the coach travelling than now; but on the other hand, one may escape more quickly from objectionable fellow-travellers, from whom in the coaching days there was no escape till the end of the journey.

This inconvenience was more felt on the Continent than in England, where the passengers were divided into three lots, or compartments—front, back, and inside; whereas the interior of the diligence, carrying ten persons, contained barely room for each person to sit upright.

I was once returning from Madrid to Paris, after having accomplished a riding tour through

Spain, visiting most of the principal towns. On quitting Madrid I rode to Bayonne, where, my horse having a bad sore back, I left him, and proceeded by diligence.

Some consternation was caused on our arrival at the hotel at Bayonne by the mispronunciation of one of my travelling companions.

We had lived very sparsely during our riding tour, oil and garlic predominating to such a degree in all the second-class "fondas" in Spain, as to prevent an English palate taking food, except he cooked it himself. As we were a party of three, this difficulty was easily got over by our taking it in turns to make the omelettes, or spatchcock a fowl at our different halting-places. This sort of diet had naturally sharpened our appetites, and even the "sniff" of a real French dinner made us ravenous. Influenced by this feeling, Colonel C——ll, addressing our hostess of The Hôtel

de France, exclaimed : "Avez-vous assez, madame, parce-que j'ai beaucoup de femmes?"

The poor woman looked thunderstruck.

"Mais, monsieur, vous m'avez rien dit de ça! Où sont-elles donc ces dames?"

I need not say that her notion that the colonel was a Turkish pasha, travelling with his harem, was soon dispelled when we took our places at the table-d'hôte *en garçon*.

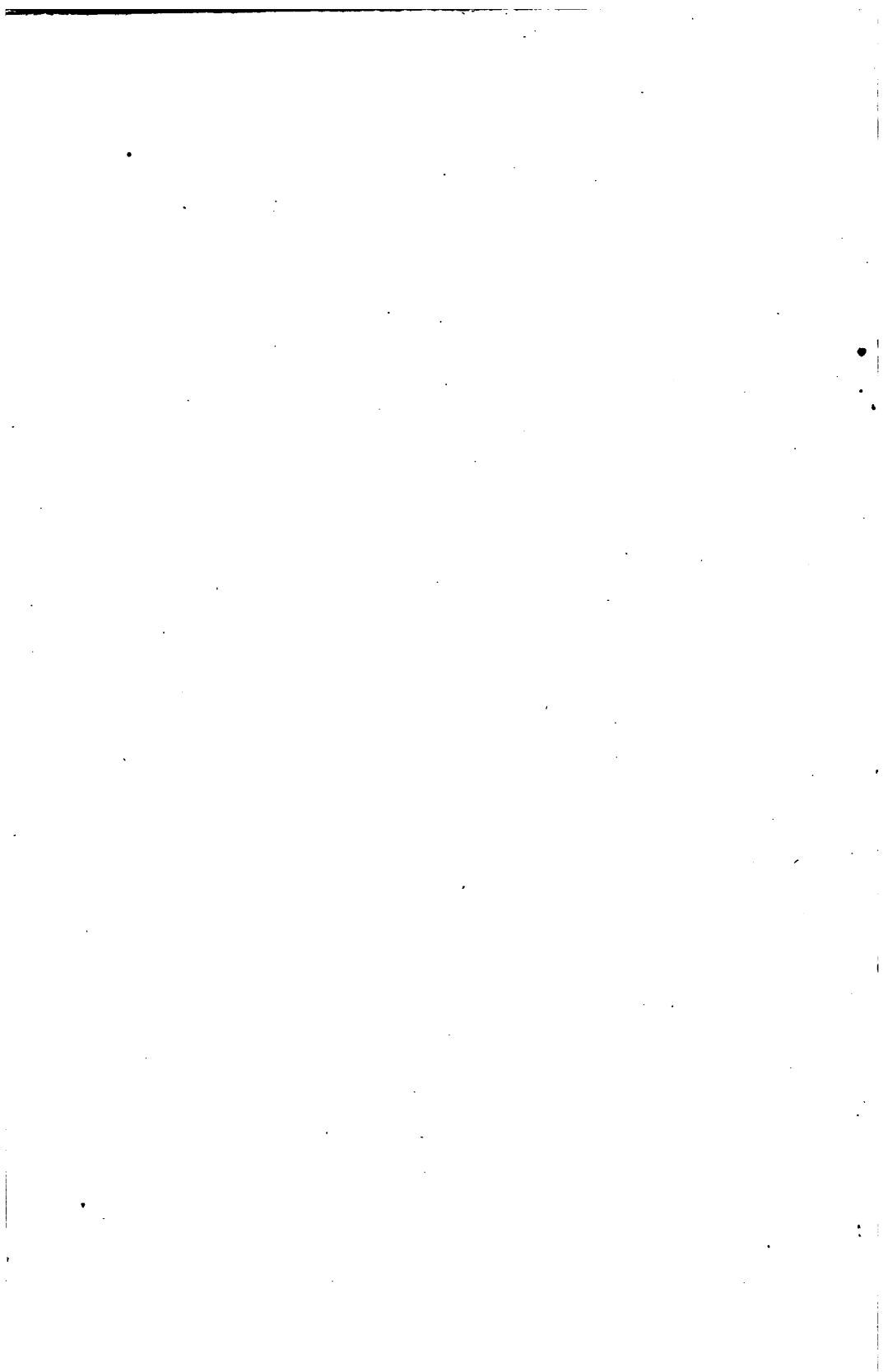
CHAPTER VII.

Draught horses—The old “fly-waggon”—Weight and pace—
Sagacity of mules—Hanging on by a wheel—The Refuge
—Hot fighting in the Alps—Suffocation—Over at last
—Railway to Paris.

HE selection of horses for draught purposes should be made with a view to the pace at which they are expected to work. You may get a perfect model for harness and draught, but if he is not cut according to the pattern which is required for fast work, half his energy and good intention will be exhausted in trying to do that for which he is physically unfit. He is prevented from throwing his weight and strength into his work,



THE OLD FLY WAGGON



because it takes him all his time to keep his place.

In the old days of "fly-waggons,"* the only means of transit for heavy goods, except by canal, the cart horse was an animal now almost extinct. He was never expected to move beyond a walk, but this walk was almost perpetual motion. He took all his food, and I may say his rest, while strolling along by day and night in the waggon. The halting-places were few and far between, and were made more for the accommodation of the few passengers who were carried in the "crate"† than for the convenience of the horses. In those days the brewers and millers emulated each other in the size and condition of their horses; one constantly met in the streets of

* Russell's waggons took twelve days between Falmouth and London, drawn by eight powerful horses—the driver riding a pony.

† A part of the waggon kept for passengers.

London a mountain of a horse, seventeen and a half hands high, loaded with flesh, legs like an elephant, drawing one small nine-gallon cask (perhaps empty) upon a truck. *Mais tout cela est changé.*

All waggons are now vans, cart horses machiners, and must trot at least six miles an hour. We now take for our model the Clydesdale and the Suffolk in preference to the Flemish and the Yorkshire. Even in agricultural work the style of horses and the rate of ploughing is widely different from that of half a century ago. In this particular the afternoon of the worn-out coach horse or hunter is rendered less irksome to him than formerly, as he can more readily accommodate himself to a good fair walk than to be always snatching at the chains only to find he must come back to his partners.

Weight in a horse is a great element in his

composition for purposes of heavy draught; but it should be taken into consideration that he has to carry that weight in addition to the work which is expected from him; and for every ounce by which he is assisted in weight, his strain in draught is increased three pounds, and so on proportionately.

Treating the subject of draught, there is no more practical illustration of the way in which the subject is understood by the animals themselves than is afforded by the long string of mules which are attached to carriages, both private and public, in crossing the Alps. The mode of putting them together is by having two at the wheel, with a continuous long string in single file before them, often as many as seventeen or twenty. The intelligence shown by these animals in threading the side of a mountain by a zigzag road is remarkable. Each mule, as he arrives at the angle, ceases to pull, apparently

knowing that having turned out of the straight line the weight of his draught would be rather an impediment to progress.

I write feelingly upon the instinct of the Italian mules, having been once indebted to their sagacity and obedience for my escape from what might have been a very serious accident.

I was travelling from Turin to Paris. The journey over Mont Cenis was then only to be performed by Fell's railway, or by the road, by diligence or private carriage. I took the latter, making a contract for the posting, and not binding the *maitre de poste* to any limited number of mules for the ascent. It was in the month of December, and at the time I left Susa, at five P.M., the snow was falling so thickly that by the time I had completed half the ascent, the road or track was completely obliterated. It was a beautiful moonlight night. I was lost in admiration of the manner in which the nine

mules, attached to a light travelling carriage, wended their way over the trackless snow.

The stupendous mountains, clothed in all the sombre grandeur of their winter attire, surged up before me, peeping, as it were, into the deep chasms beneath, on the very verge of which the mules moved cautiously along.

It was wonderful to watch, where the road twisted and turned almost at right angles, the careful manner in which each animal in turn dropped out of his work till they were again in the straight running.

Notwithstanding the beauty of the scenery and the interest with which I watched the long string of mules, which appeared at times to be actually balancing themselves upon the narrow ledges, I was not without anxiety, partly, perhaps, on account of a friend to whom I had given a seat in my carriage. He had recently broken his leg at Turin, and was

taking the earliest opportunity of a safe escort to London.

The driver had no more direct control over the mules than could be conveyed by his voice, though I must do him the justice to say that when he did open his mouth he did so to some purpose.

His mules, however, did not often require reproof, and a short grunt, with the name Garibaldi or Emanuel, sufficed to make them spring forward as if they were ashamed of being named before strangers.

The driver himself frequently makes short cuts across the angles of the road as he plods through the snow, leaving the mules to thread their way entirely according to their own judgment.

It was on one of these occasions, when the driver loitering out of sight, perhaps to cut his tobacco, was absent somewhat longer than

usual, that the mules appeared to be feeling their way with more than ordinary caution, while the uneasy motion of the carriage indicated that we were not travelling upon a plain surface. Almost instinctively, I ejaculated at the top of my voice, imitating as near as I could the driver's intonation: "Wo-a-a-h!" Every mule stopped dead short. If they had not done so, or moved on one single inch, this incident would never have been recorded by me!

Opening the door of the carriage I beheld a frightful precipice, over which we were literally hanging; while, turning round in order to step out with greater caution, I found that the weight of my body perforated the lightly-packed snow, and that I could not feel the ground beneath it. Had it not been for the firm grip I had of the wing of the carriage, I must inevitably have been precipitated into

the abyss of snow-covered boulders many hundred feet deep below.

When I had recovered my footing by clinging to the wheels of the carriage, I found that there was not more than an inch of ground between us and eternity. Thus, but for the admirable patience and obedience of the mules, we must in another instant have been launched bodily down the precipice.

We looked round in vain for the driver, and it was not till I had succeeded in pulling out my lame companion, and seating him in the snow, that I saw the fellow come strolling up the hill in a cloud of tobacco smoke, singing at the top of his voice one of the patois refrains.

To punch his head was my first impulse; but this was soon dispelled by the duties imposed on me at this moment of peril.

First, if the mules moved an inch the



OVER MOUNT CENIS IN A MULE CARRIAGE.

carriage, with baggage, etc., must have lost its balance and gone down.

Second, the attention required by my poor friend, who, unable to stand in consequence of his accident, sat by the roadside in the snow, praying me to seek for his crutches.

Third, the doubt if it would be wise to unhitch the mules from the carriage, a dangerous experiment, as I verily believe the weight of the carriage was sustained in a great measure by the traces of the wheelers.

There are upon Mont Cenis houses of Refuge, at intervals of about an English mile, occupied by people employed by the Government, to render assistance and shelter to travellers who may be overtaken by snowstorms. Countless lives have been rescued by means of the appliances which these afford. They are conducted upon something the same principle as our Humane Society. During the winter season when the snow drifts, it is no

uncommon thing for travellers to be snow-staid in these Refuges for eight or ten days.

On the occasion of which I write the snow continued to fall thickly, and, there being wind enough to cause a drift, I was anxious to get my sick friend into one of these houses with as little delay as possible.

Now came the difficulty. To get the carriage back on to the road without letting it slip over the ridge required skilful engineering. The mules at the wheels hung on with exemplary perseverance. Had they relaxed in the slightest degree the carriage must have taken them, and probably some more of the string, down the frightful precipice.

The intelligent animals appeared to understand the situation as well as we, and scarcely needed the driver's ceaseless cautious "W-o-a-a-h! w-o-a-a-h!"

I decided first upon lightening the carriage,

by removal of the heavier luggage. This I did with the double view of relieving the mules from the strain they were maintaining, and of rescuing some at least of our worldly goods from impending danger. Whilst thus engaged the snow continued to fall in such blinding clouds as to darken the air; and the wind drifted it, and hurried it about, half burying every article of baggage as we detached it in turn from the carriage.

My next object was to rescue the carriage from its imminent peril, as being the only means of getting my lame friend to the Refuge, a quarter of a mile distant.

I therefore detached the string of mules from those at the wheel—the latter holding on like grim death to the carriage during the necessary delay—then, taking three from the string of single mules (there was no room for more on the road), I fastened their rope-traces round the body of the carriage, when, all being ready, a few grunts

from the driver made them spring across the track and land the carriage on its side in the road. The two mules who had held on so resolutely came over also, and, from the draught becoming irregular, some confusion occurred; chiefly owing to the stupidity of the driver, who uttered in the same breath "Wo-a-a-h!" and "U-u-u-p!" one being the word to stop, the other to proceed. All this occurred in the midst of heavy blinding clouds of snow, covering every article which impeded its course.

Having arrested the carriage in its downward course, the next thing was to get it on its perpendicular; and this we accomplished with the assistance of the same three mules which had capsized it. Right glad was I to replace my poor friend in his seat. He had been suffering agony from cold whilst sitting in the snow, incapable, through his accident, to render me the least assistance. Finally, I collected such of our

traps as could be recovered from the snow, and, having hitched on the string anew, proceeded cautiously to the Refuge.

This being the first heavy fall of snow of the winter, our arrival was rather a surprise, and found the inhabitants somewhat unprepared. It was the work, however, but of a few minutes to kindle an enormous wood fire, in front of which we soon became dry and warm.

The inmates of the Refuge, who were of the peasant class, overwhelmed us with simple attentions. The supply of provisions was small and presented no great variety, comprising chiefly black bread, macaroni, dry beans, and hard sausages, with a little oil.

The first night spent at the Refuge was amusing from its novelty, and as we all slept in the same apartment with the Piedmontese

family, we had to make ourselves at home as best we could. One of the daughters, a girl of sixteen, had served a campaign in London with a tambourine as an accompaniment to her own voice and her brother's barrel-organ. The boy was about twelve, with very black eyes and a long Italian chin. When addressed, his countenance relaxed into a beseeching smile, showing a set of the whitest teeth, thrusting forward his half-open palm, and jerking his long forelock with the other hand, he whimpered out: "*Carità, signori, si vi piaci. Signori, pauvre geen-peeg.*" He had carried a guinea-pig on the top of his organ when in England, but all their property had been confiscated for arrears of rent, and they were sent home as paupers by the Italian consul.

What was our horror when on the following morning we looked out upon mountains of snow,

without the slightest indication of any track. Our prospect of being able to proceed was doubtful enough. Both our host and the muleteer returned from reconnoitring with hopeless faces. Snow had been falling all night, and, until a track had been cleared, the road was quite impassable even for mules without a vehicle, and we were unfortunately so near the summit as to be beyond communication with either base. There was nothing for it but to remain where we were, and to be thankful for our escape.

The prospect of passing another night in these wretched quarters was not exhilarating; but my lame friend was so unequal to any exertion, that I did not dare (in opposition to the opinions of the driver and the padrone) to make any attempt to proceed. Moreover, we were getting more accustomed to the smell of oil and garlic, with which the whole atmosphere of the Refuge was

impregnated. The surprise and confusion consequent upon our arrival had worn off; and we had fallen into our places more as members of the family than strangers.

As the second evening advanced, I took my last look of the snowy world, and found it dismal in the extreme. The sheds and yard in which the mules were picketed were barricaded against attack from the wolves which infest these Alpine ridges, two lamps being hung at either entrance as the best safeguard against these ferocious marauders, who become so bold during the winter months, as to carry away goats and sheep from beneath the very roofs of inhabited dwellings.

I now turned my attention to the prospects for the night; and having arranged a comfortable shake-down with the cushions of the carriage, I stretched myself on a bench; where our late exposure to the cold, added to the anxiety of the circumstances, aided and encouraged by the heat

of a superb fire composed of roots and peat, lulled me into a profound sleep.

During this state of unconsciousness I travelled over miles of snow, the surface being sufficiently hard to carry my horses and sleigh without perforating it. I saw myriads of wolves and bears, which grinned and snarled at me as I passed, but did not interrupt my progress; on the contrary, they encouraged me by their gestures to proceed, always pointing onwards. It would have been well for me if I had disregarded their direction, as I flew on, urging my horses to a gallop, always ascending the hill, though I did not appear to get any higher; at length I turned upon the trackless height, out of consideration for my horses; and was about to descend into a ravine, when I found myself surrounded by hundreds of savages engaged in hot warfare. I was in the thick of the fight.

No firearms, no smoke; but a great deal of yelling and screaming.

I was surrounded by both sides ; and though my appearance upon the field caused a momentary truce, hostilities were soon resumed, and I was struck in the chest by an arrow—which, being barbed, could not be extricated. I made great efforts to protect my lame friend from being trampled upon in the *mêlée*. No more violence was offered, and I hoped, from the more subdued tones of the contending warriors, that negotiations for a peaceful solution of the strife—whatever it might be—were taking the place of the fight.

I tried to persuade myself that I had been dreaming, and that the barbed arrow in my breast was the effect of the hard savoyard upon which I had supped ; but there was the reality. There was my poor friend imploring me to keep them off his broken limb. There were the savages, yelling and disputing in unknown languages, covered by their shields, and encased in armour

which looked like straw bands bound round their legs to the knee.

The reader will have guessed the solution; and he is right. The savoyard and black bread upon which I supped, succeeded by the heavy sleep which was induced by the roaring fire, occasioned the dream which supplies the story. Late in the night the Refuge was invaded by a crowd of Piedmontese peasants, who are engaged to cut passes in the snow to enable the traffic to be carried on. These gangs are hired without reference to character or conduct; consequently, when the first deep snow of the winter occurs, it brings together many opposite feuds and factions, who take this opportunity of settling, either by stiletto or by words and wrangling, all existing differences.

Finding the snow not sufficiently settled to proceed with their operations, they had sought the nearest refuge to their work to await the

lulling of the storm, their huge wooden shovels slung across their shoulders, and the straw bands round their legs doing duty for the shields and armour of the contending savages.

The remainder of the night was passed in a dense cloud of the smoke of bad tobacco, mingled with the vapours arising from our damp visitors.

I could not in common humanity leave my disabled comrade to the rough treatment of this army of road-cleaners, or I should have much preferred the outside elements, with all their severity, to the offensive atmosphere of the Refuge.

The dawn of day, however, brought with it a slight change in the direction of the wind, which had very much abated in its violence, and this enabled the men of the wooden shovels to clear out and continue their work. It was not till late on the following morning that the track had

been sufficiently worked out for us to proceed. We then attached our mules to a sleigh and crawled to the summit, where we left our long team and proceeded, with one pair of horses, to descend the mountain.

When the snow has fallen in sufficient quantities to cover the road, carriages on wheels are abandoned, and the traffic is carried on by means of sleighs.

The descent is performed in a marvellously short time, the horses being very clever, and the driver having sufficient nerve to let them use their own discretion as to pace.

The railway terminus at St. Jean de Maurienne affording a good buffet, we were right glad of an opportunity of refreshing our exhausted systems with some civilised food, and, having done so, took the train to Paris.

CHAPTER VIII.

Right as the mail—Proprietors and contractors—Guards and coachmen—A cold foot-bath—A lawyer nonsuited—Old Mac—The Spectre squire—An unsolved mystery.

“**R**IGHT as the mail,” is an expression which even now conveys an impression of perfection ; and what indeed could have been more thoroughly adapted to the work for which it was designed than the old English mail ? There was an air of solidity and importance about the royal mail to which everything gave way. The origin of the term “Right as the Mail,” arose more from the fact that the guards (Government servants) were supplied with chronometers which were compared daily at the

General Post Office, and consequently dictated the correct time to all the clocks and watches down the road.

As some of my younger readers may not have seen a stage-coach, it may be well to describe one. The weight was about one ton. It was painted red, having a royal coat-of-arms on the panel of the door. It was constructed to carry four inside and four out, having a bag or basket for luggage, the roof being reserved for heavy mail-bags. A round seat behind, covered with a skin, was for the guard, pockets for pistols being placed on either side.

Contracts for horsing the mails did not often change hands, though tenders were formally invited every year.

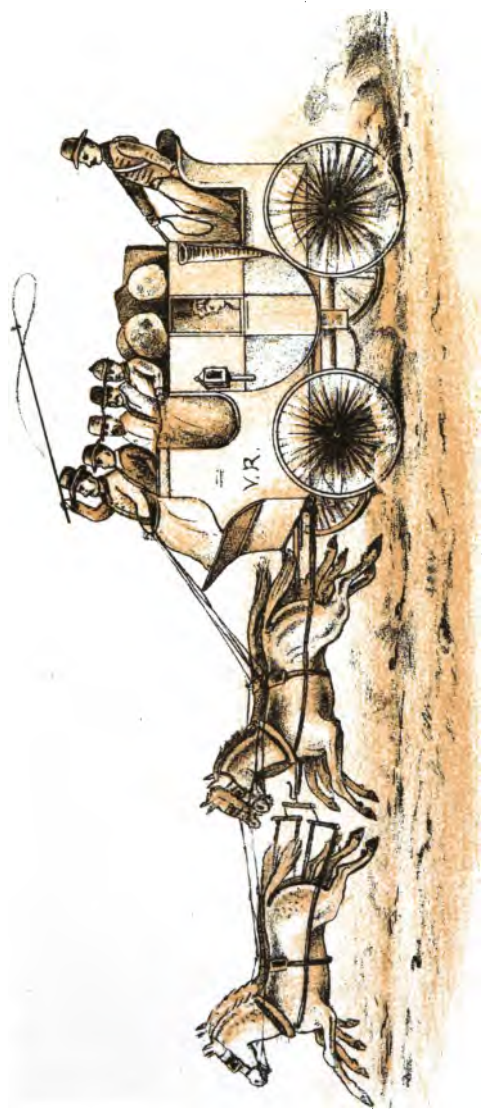
Nelson, Shearman, and Chaplin were amongst the largest contractors. The latter had at one time one thousand seven hundred horses employed in coaching. A story is told of him

which proves that, whilst he was a kind and considerate master, he always kept his weather eye open. He used to dine with his coachmen once every year, when one of his toasts was "Success to shouldering!"* adding: "But let me catch *you* at it!"

One great source of profit to a mail was the oil which was allowed by the General Post Office. A mail was always expected to have its lamps lighted after sunset, moonlight or not, consequently the amount of oil "shouldered," or charged for, though not used, was considerable.

It was a beautiful sight to see the mails on the King's birthday assembled at the General Post Office—the men all dressed in new liveries, and in most cases with new harness; the horses

* The term "shouldering" referred to many short shillings which were not put upon the way-bill, consequently perquisites of coachmen and guards.



THE ROYAL MAIL.

decorated with bouquets of flowers—making a promenade through the principal streets in the west of London.

This parade did not in any way interfere with the regular work, and nearly all the night mails assembled at the General Post Office at eight o'clock to receive their bags. Some of the Western and Southern mails were met by a mail-cart with their bags at their own booking offices in the West-end. The fastest mail out of London was the "Devonport," commonly called the "Quicksilver;" and who that ever saw can forget it, with its four chestnuts, driven by Charles Ward, leaving the White Horse Cellars at half-past eight!

How it rattled through Piccadilly! passing all the other mails, eight in number, and arriving first at Hounslow, where they all changed horses.

Ward drove on to Bagshot, returning with

the up-mail about three A.M. ; sixty miles a-night, and this for seven years.

Another coachman, Bill Harbridge, to whom I have already referred in these pages, drove the "Manchester" mail for two years out of London, performing one hundred miles a-night ; fifty miles down and fifty miles up. I have his own authority for saying that he used to take as much as fourteen pounds to sixteen pounds a-week in fees, the Manchester merchants used to pay so well. The General Post Office also allowed him two guineas a-week. He was another instance of the total want of prudence, unfortunately so common to his class, and died in the workhouse.

Although coachmen and guards, when coaching was in its zenith, were in receipt of comfortable incomes, it is very rare that an instance is found of their having provided for a rainy day, and still more rare to find any instance

of their having taken service in any railway establishment.

Many of the coaches, when there was not too much opposition, would earn from five pounds to six pounds a-mile per month. If corn and beans were not unusually high, three pounds a mile was said to pay.

The profits of a coach were divided monthly, and all outgoings disbursed—the mails having considerable advantage from their having neither duty nor gates to pay. One of the largest sources of revenue was derived from the booking of parcels, each article being charged twopence. Articles of value were registered, and paid according to the amount insured.

Some years ago I was driving a fast coach in the north of England, when a singular surprise occurred to me.

It was sometimes the custom to give the mail

teams a rest, by letting them run over a longer stage, where they were not expected to go so fast as the mail was timed. This change had been made, on the occasion of which I write, from Bamby Moor.

We rattled along over the eight miles of ground allotted to the mail stage, and here was their natural stop. No remark had been made to me either by the coachman or by the proprietor (who happened to be upon the coach), and who then cautioned me that the horses would want to run up to the place where the mail pulled up to change. I took precautionary measures accordingly, in order to get them by it. I had succeeded (as I thought) admirably, and, having passed the place, was looking round rather with a view of inviting a compliment from the professional coachman who was sitting behind me, when, all at once, as if shot out of a gun, the whole team bolted out of

the road, and we found ourselves in the middle of a deep horsepond.

This team was accustomed, when taken out of the mail, to be ridden at once into the pond to be washed. They had run cheerfully past their stable, but the temptation of the horsepond was irresistible, so in they went.

There were two elderly ladies inside the coach, who screamed out loudly for help and a lifeboat.

It was one of those deep roadside ponds, with a white rail round it; plenty of room to get in, but very little room to get out. Here we were planted, water up to the axles, inside full, and the team in the greatest confusion; although each horse looked satisfied that he had done the right thing, and was in no particular hurry to get out.

After much splashing and pawing we got the

leaders off, and, by backing her on the lock, I got the coach safely ashore ; not, however, before the old ladies had got a thorough ducking.

I superintended personally the administration of two glasses of hot brandy-and-water to each of the ladies who had been involuntarily subjected to a cold foot-bath. .

There was so much opposition, in the days of which I am writing—forty years ago—that coach proprietors were only too anxious to make reparation in the most liberal manner for any little inconvenience to which passengers might be accidentally exposed. In this case the proprietor was present, and would readily have complied with any reasonable wish expressed by the passengers.

Modesty almost forbids me to mention here that, when the coach was ready to start, I was requested by the proprietor to continue to drive ; which, to an amateur, and a young amateur, was

no small compliment—evidently showing that our immersion in the horsepond had not been caused by any want of skill or experience on my part.

When opposition was at its height in England, every device was resorted to in order to render one coach more popular than another. Advertising was carried to a very great extent, and squibs were unreservedly circulated in order to lower the prestige of the contending parties. As, for instance, notice was given that a certain coach had reduced its rate for carrying pigs and poultry; no charge would be made for children under twelve, provided they sat upon the knees of their parents, or those of some other passenger; great care was taken that “hospital linen” should be stowed *inside*.

Although opposition between the coaches was carried to great extremes, it never got to quite so

high a pitch as amongst the postmasters, amongst whom within the last fifty years the emulation was so rife upon the North Road that the horses of a private carriage would be forcibly taken off and a fresh pair attached at the Red Lion at Barnet, and the next stage to St. Albans (nine miles) performed without charge, in order to prevent the "turn" from going to the White Hart, where the traveller might have partaken of a sandwich and a glass of sherry gratis.

This state of things could not last long, especially as in its next phase it entailed the hiring of a staff of fighting-men to secure the employment of the Red Lion horses.

Matters having arrived at such a pitch as to cause a free fight in the highroad whenever a posting job hove in sight, the local authorities were obliged to interfere, and Messrs. Newman and Bryant, the landlords of the two hotels, were bound over to keep the peace and abide by the

regular tariff of one shilling and threepence a mile, and threepence the postboy.

The guard of the mail, apart from his being a certificated newsmonger, was held in great respect by the idlers who collected to see the mail change in every town or village through which he passed. What he said was absolute, there was no time for argument, and the few words which he addressed to the customary group afforded matter for the smoking-room for a whole evening. Many trifling incidents and occurrences, by the time they had passed through a jury of gin-and-water and churchwardens, were distorted into the most terrible and tragic facts.

Every road has its legend, and guards of the coaches make stock-in-trade of the ghosts and supernatural appearances as it suits their opportunity. A tale may be so often repeated that, however sceptical the narrator is at first, he

becomes quite ready to vouch for the whole truth of it on more intimate acquaintance.

Some ghosts are more profitable than others, their feats and appearances being varied in character.

An old mail guard, who had served the Government in that capacity for forty years, and who was in receipt of a pension of eighty pounds per annum, was in the habit of coming to London during the summer season and taking service on one of the "Revival" coaches; he rode behind me for three seasons to Rochester, and two to Brighton, and behind Chandos Pole, upon that road, for many more. His anecdotes were inexhaustible; he recounted the most incredible catalogue of accidents, attacks, delays, impediments to the mails he had been on, in all of which he had played the hero's part. His quixotic triumphs over every sort of difficulty were most amusing, and not without result, as I know, on

one occasion, he declined a Saturday journey behind me to Brighton. He had one ghost only upon this road, whose appearances, however, were so innocent and evident that he was obliged to draw largely upon his imagination, and borrow matter from other goblins, in order to make him sufficiently sensational. I give the naked tale, and leave the garnishing of "Old Mac" to the imagination of my readers.

Upon the side of the highroad to Brighton, not a hundred miles from Handcross, there stands, in its own ornamental grounds, one of those very picturesque residences which is neither a villa nor a mansion, though it combined the modesty of the one with the importance of the other. The house was sufficiently retired from the road to admit of a spacious lawn studded with ornamental trees of considerable size, which gave the whole thing a park-like appearance, and, standing

as it did upon an eminence, presented a generally picturesque appearance.

The owner of this property was a gentleman of independent means, and of rather eccentric habits. He resided all the year round at —, never went into society, and never entertained friends at home.

Many years were passed in the quiet routine of everyday life; nothing remarkable occurred except that the owner was absent daily for several hours, and could not be induced to give any explanation of whither he went, or otherwise account for his absence. When closely questioned by his wife, he used to evade the subject, and implore her not to press her inquiry upon him, as, if he were to disclose the secret, he might never be allowed to return.

Time went on, and the anxiety (to say nothing of the curiosity) of the wife to solve this mysterious

absence and the secrecy it involved, induced her to communicate with a private inquiry office to solve it.

This step was no sooner taken than an end was put to all local evidence, by the sudden disappearance of the gentleman, without leaving the slightest clue to his whereabouts. Coverts were searched, ponds dragged, rewards offered, all in vain. No word was ever heard from that day to this of the missing gentleman. The wife continued to live at —— until her death, which occurred several years after the mysterious disappearance of her husband. And, during these years, the room which had been occupied by the gentleman, upon the ground-floor (window opening upon the lawn) was still visited on occasions by an apparition, who frequently changed his hat and gloves, leaving old ones behind, and taking those which were always neatly brushed and laid out for his use.

There is a broad quick-set hedge, cut square upon the top, separating the premises from the highroad, and, walking upon this hedge, may be seen on almost any night the "Spectre Squire."

The apparition of the squire was not seen only by a few of the neighbours, but sceptics came from long distances, and returned satisfied that they had seen (and some that they had conversed with) the phantom.

An old man who kept a turnpike-gate, not a quarter of a mile from the haunted residence, assured me that he had seen him, night after night, and described it as follows :

"I'd a-come in, and was sitting in the porch doorway, about *leben* o'clock, as fur as I remember. My old 'oman she kep' 'ollering out to me : 'Why don't you ope' the gate ; there's a funeral a-coming?' I thought she was mazed. 'There's nobody there,' says I. Well, whilst I was there I could see nothing, but the gate took and

swung open of itself, and come back on the bolt, and this it did four or five times! I took and I got up and put the chain on the gate and locked it. Oh dear, oh dear! Down he come, and he was that angry! He walked backwards and forwards through the gate, right through the middle—that never stopped him a minute!

“Since that I’ve a-seed him scores of times doing the same thing, and he takes no notice of me, only scowling-like.

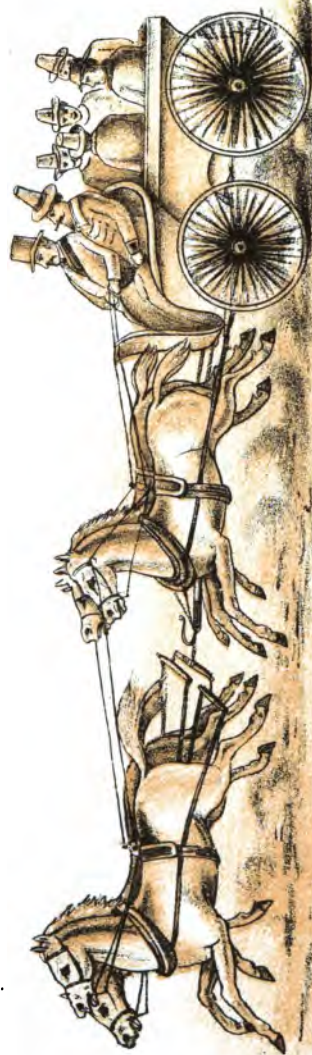
“I chain and lock the gate o’ nights, but I always find it open in the morning; and I can’t tell how.”

This was one of the best-conducted ghosts I have come across; as, apart from scaring the villagers by his midnight rambles, he bore the best of characters in the neighbourhood.

This house and premises to this day share the fate of others which have fallen into the hands

of unexplained tenants, and are subject to visits from supernatural agents.

Strange noises are heard; windows, which were barred and fastened overnight, are found open in the morning. Servants will not remain in the situation, and do not like to explain the cause of their wishing to leave. The turnpike-house is pulled down, as no one could be found to inhabit it.



AN AUSTRIAN PRAG

CHAPTER IX.

Public and private conveyances in Austria and Hungary—An English dragsman posed—The Vienna race-meeting—Gentleman “Jocks”—A moral exemplified.

LL matters connected with the management and treatment of horses are better understood in Austria and Hungary than in any other part of the Continent; but even there they have not arrived at the completeness so familiar here. The public conveyances still partake of the genus diligence, though they have the advantage of being divided into two classes—first and second. In the latter smoking is allowed.

The horses are yoked much in the same

manner as in France—three at wheel, and any number in pairs before them, as the nature of the road may require. The travelling pace is about eight English miles per hour, and to this they adhere. The length of the posts, or stages, makes a journey more tedious than it would otherwise be, as it always conveys the impression that the last four or five miles of the sixteen or eighteen has to be performed by jaded cattle, which must use them up more quickly, in the long run, than letting them work in more reasonable distances. If economy be the object, it must certainly be negatived in the end by the last four or five miles which are tacked on to every post.

The conductor, or guard, goes through the whole journey, be it long or short; but the driver is changed at every stage, with the horses. The public conveyances at Vienna and Pesth are excellent, very superior to anything we have in

London. The carriages for hire in the streets consist of open britzskas and landaus, with pairs of horses, which are of a very good class. The drivers are very respectable men, and excellent coachmen. They drive very fast, and, though the streets are narrow and tortuous, collisions are very rare. There are also close carriages (broughams) with one horse or a pair, the former being called *coupés*, and not held in much favour with the *élite*.

The tariff is not excessive, and a wrangle is rarely heard.

With reference to private equipages, although they imitate as much as possible the English style, they invariably fail in some little particular, which, to an English critic, stamps the turn-out as continental. For instance, the coachman sits low, with his knees bent, having one rein in each hand; the horses are so coupled that their heads touch each other; the

pole-pieces are so tight as to destroy any action which the horses might otherwise display.

Some years ago I made the acquaintance of a noble prince in Hungary, who owned a large stud of horses of all descriptions—racers, hunters, harness-horses, and hacks. He invited me to stay with him during the race-week at Vienna, asking me at the same time if I would drive his drag each day to the course, assuring me that it was appointed quite in the English style, and that I should feel myself entirely at home.

The first day of the meeting having arrived, my host introduced me to various other noble persons, descanting loudly, as I could not avoid hearing, on my talent as a coachman; after which, and having partaken of a sumptuous *déjeuner*, we walked round to the stables. Here my anticipations were somewhat damped, as my noble host, pointing to a very long low *char-à-banc*, much upon the principle of

an elongated Croydon basket, exclaimed: "Ah, ecco a qui ch  la carrozza. Heer ees my drarg." And, seizing a long pig-whip from the socket of the carriage, he said: "You can make ze weep, ah yes?" Suiting the action to the word, he began cracking it backwards and forwards over his head with wonderful proficiency, after the manner of the French postilions. My heart sank within me; if this was expected of me, I felt I should signally fail—I who had been brought up to learn that to *hear* the whip at all was a fault. To be expected to flourish out of the courtyard with a succession of reports like an eighteen-pounder, was rather too severe a test of my knowledge of "making ze weep."

After walking round the stables, which were very complete and in fine order, the team was brought out. It was composed of four Hungarian horses with very long manes and tails, smacking rather of the circus than the road.

I did not at all approve of the way in which they were being strung together, but an English stud-groom in the prince's service advised my making no alteration "at present," as they had always been driven in that way, and they could be very awkward if they liked.

All being ready, and the party having taken their seats, I took mine, and found myself—with a mere apology for a footboard—seated pretty nearly on a level with the wheelers' backs.

The prince, who had continued to "make ze weep" (albeit of this the animals took not the slightest notice), now handed it to me, and we started, or rather the whole affair went jumping out of the courtyard in a succession of terrible bounds. The horses were, however, very highly bitted, and I had no difficulty in holding them in on our passage through the town; but, when we got to the open "prater," they became very restless and impatient, a phenomenon explained in a

whisper from my host: "Heer I make ze gallop. You not?"

Upon this I slacked my hand, and they went away like four demons; dashing past everything on the road at the rate of fifty miles an hour!

The prince, who expressed his surprise that I had not "knocked" anything in our wild career, was less astonished than myself, especially as when, nearing the course, the track became crowded with every description of vehicle, while the rules of the road were entirely set at defiance!

We managed, however, to reach the grandstand in safety. It was a brilliant day, and the glowing colours of female costume, from the royal family downwards, produced a magnificent effect.

But if the colours worn by the ladies were dazzling and gorgeous, what shall we say of the hues selected for the silk jackets of the gentlemen

riders, who, in order to proclaim to the multitude the part they were about to take, hovered about amongst the crowd, like tropical butterflies who had lost their way? Indeed, so much importance is attached to the privilege of sporting silk, that it is no uncommon thing for a noble owner to carry a stone over his weight, in order to display jacket and boots on the course, rather than "give a leg up" to a lighter man.

The events of the day were contended for principally by gentlemen "jocks;" and bets of a few guildens produced as much interest as if thousands of pounds had been staked.

After passing an agreeable day (the larger portion of which was occupied in getting the amateur jocks to the post) I proceeded to find my team; and took a sly opportunity of making many alterations in the *attelage*, giving them all more room in their couplings and in their pole-pieces, middle bar instead of lower, and cheek to those

I thought would bear it, buckling the traces (as near as I could) at even lengths, slacking all the curbs, and lengthening some of the head-stalls. The effect was marvellous; instead of the wild impetuous team I had brought up from the city, I had now four horses working evenly and pleasantly together, and, after the first quarter of a mile, not pulling an ounce more than they ought. Here let me repeat the maxim: "A team properly put together is half driven."

CHAPTER X.

North-country fairs — An untrained foxhunter — Tempted again—Extraordinary memory of the horse—Satisfactory results from a Latch-key.

IN former chapters I have spoken of coachmen and guards, both in the heyday and afternoon of their career —then, once qualified for this line of life, seldom exhibiting an inclination to change. But let me now descend to the coach *horse*. In the good old coaching days, so great was the demand, that breeders were found who devoted themselves to a class of animal calculated for coach work and little else. There was an understood price, and buyers for the contractors attended the North-

country fairs and made their selection—twenty, fifty, or eighty horses, as required—the individual price never being referred to during the deal, so long as the average was not exceeded.

Seasoned horses were more valuable to proprietors than green uneducated colts from the fair; consequently, many opportunities were afforded for “chops” equally advantageous to both parties. An old hunter (old, not so much with reference to his years, as because he had been thus employed) made an admirable teamster. Horses with a blemish, or perhaps from some caprice of their owners, were often drafted while in their zenith, and those who were fortunate enough to pick them up, purchased with them some months (if not years) of good keep and condition, which could not be too highly appreciated. Condition means time; and nothing but time can effectually produce it. The power of a horse may be doubled by the condition of his

frame, as it may be reduced by mismanagement and low keep to half its natural strength.

A large breeder in the North of England, a fine specimen of the old English yeoman, whom I visited some years ago, remarked to me :

“I send all my colts, at two years old, to plough. They may play with it or they may work, just as they please. They are only out from eleven to three. It makes them temperate, accustoms them to be handled, and develops their muscles. I have bred some high-priced ones, and all have been served the same.

“In fifty-five examples of this treatment I have never known a single instance of harm arising from it. This horse which I am now riding” (and he called my attention to a very clever-looking black-brown gelding, about fifteen hands three inches) “has worked on-and-off on this farm for twenty-three years. I have been tempted to sell him four different times, but he has always come

back to me. We nearly lost each other the last time, but, by a strange accident, I recovered him.

“I was on the coach, going to Doncaster, and when we changed horses at —— I noticed that one of them began pawing and neighing, appearing much excited. The horsekeeper reproved him, and led him into his place at the wheel. Having taken my seat on the box with the coachman, I observed that the animal was troubled by the fretfulness of his near-side wheeler. He jumped, backed, and shied to such a degree as to induce me to remark to the coachman that he had a fresh one there.

“‘No, not fresh,’ was the reply. ‘I’ve had him here these ten months, and a better I never drove. He never played this game before.’

“‘Where does he come from?’ I asked.

“‘I heard the governor say from Cornwall, but he bought him at Bristol,’ said the man.

“Up to this moment every action, every movement, had so entirely reminded me of my friend Latch-key, that I could almost have sworn to his identity. But how he could have come out of Cornwall to be sold at Bristol puzzled me.

“On arriving at the end of the stage, however, my suspicions were confirmed. This was my old friend and favourite, Latch-key, and although we had been separated for more than two years, he remembered me better than I did him, and seemed anxious to renew all the pettings and caresses which used to pass between us.”

Not to weary my reader with a history of the whole life of this horse, there is still something so remarkable in the fact of a man having bred a horse, and then purchased him four different times, that I may be forgiven for giving a slight sketch of his antecedents—as far as they could be traced by my host.

“Foaled in 1828. The dam, being blind, lost her way, fell into a ditch, and was fatally injured. The foal was reared by hand, chiefly upon ass’s milk. Being a privileged member of the farmyard group, he became the constant companion of his foster-brother, the foal of the mare donkey which had supplied all his wants. These two grazed in the orchard, frolicked in the park, and were always to be found near the house together. The young ass was an adept at opening gates, and the colt had acquired a knowledge of the art to such perfection that no fastening short of a chain and padlock could keep him in. Thence he acquired the sobriquet of Latch-key.

“At the age of two years he went to plough with other colts of his own age. The monotony of this work did not suit him, and hearing the hounds one day running at a short distance from his work, he was seized with a sudden determination to follow them, and after a severe

and protracted kicking-match, having knocked two partners out of time, made his escape. Away he went, with part of his chains and a spreading-bar still hanging to him. These encumbrances caused him some awkward falls to begin with, which only served to increase the amusement he afforded to the field, as he quickly righted himself and resumed his place in the front rank.

“The country was stiff and the field getting select when Latch-key joined the cry. The hounds had got a good straight-necked fox before them, and there was a rattling scent—one of those days when the only way to live with them was by galloping from parish to parish, and then only to find they were two fields before you. But I am digressing, and it is quite necessary to go straight in such an affair as I am describing. Taking every fence as it came, in company with the foremost riders, Latch-key held his own, and

it was not till, at the end of forty-five minutes, the gallant fox saved his brush by getting into a rabbit-hole, that, with heaving flanks, distended nostrils, and dripping with perspiration, he received the commendations of the field as they came up on the line.

“‘Bravo, young ’un! I should like to have you at five years old.’

“‘Where does he come from?’ etc. etc.

“The fox had brought them over a distance of nine miles as the crow flies, and few witnessed the finish.

“‘Catch that cart-colt, and take him down to the farmhouse. They may know him, my lad. And here is a pot of beer for you.’

“All good fox-hunters are Good Samaritans, and in this case the life of what proved afterwards to be a most valuable animal was saved by the charitable attention of the gentlemen in scarlet. It was found, when the yokel went up to him

to lead him away, that he was standing in a pool of blood, having staked himself severely in the chest. If the wound had not been plugged and promptly attended to, the colt's first day's hunting would have been his last.

"Latch-key remained in the quarters he had accidentally dropped into until he was well enough to travel, when he returned to his native home. In addition to a very severe stake, he was otherwise much scarred by the broken plough-harness, and consequently required careful nursing to restore him to health and soundness.

"During the next two years he was kept apart from other young stock, and was constantly fed and petted by the farmer and his family. At the beginning of the fifth year, when he had been broken and was in his best looks, a dealer from London came down and bought him for a handsome sum.

"When he had been sufficiently prepared for a

London show he was sold to a gentleman in Berkshire, who hunted him four seasons, and then, finding he did not like harness, sold him for a reduced price at Tattersall's, and he fell into the hands of a coper, who, finding he would not harness, chopped him away to a salesman. The latter sent him, with several others, to Hull, to be shipped for St. Petersburg. He was on the point of being embarked, when my son, who happened to be at Hull at the time, recognised and, well knowing his intrinsic value, bought him for double the contract price. This was in 1838. He had not been at home a week when he was sold to a cavalry officer, who found him a first-class hunter, and did not regret having given me two hundred guineas for him.

“He changed hands several times in the regiment, at various prices, and was finally sold to a young squire, whose effects came to the hammer under the superintendence of the sheriff, at

York. At this sale I purchased Latch-key for thirty-seven guineas, and took him for my own riding.

“Although much attached to the horse, a very good offer tempted me once more to part with him, in order to effect the sale of several others which had been selected, provided he were thrown in.

“This time he went to London again, and was broken to harness, and sold to a noble lord, who took him to Edinburgh. Here he met with an accident through collision with a tradesman’s cart, which disfigured and lamed him for a considerable time. Whilst under treatment of a veterinary surgeon, an intimate friend of mine, and belonging to my neighbourhood, finding the horse would be sold for ‘a song,’ purchased him for me, and sent him home, where he soon recovered, and resumed his place as my hack. This was in the year 1845.

"I continued to ride him for several years, until on one eventful day I was induced once more to throw him in with a string I was selling to a London dealer; and from that time we never set eyes on each other till our mutual recognition in the coach at —.

"This is another instance of the extraordinary memory possessed by horses, and a convincing proof that they are as prone to remember kindness and good treatment as they do punishment and discomfort.

"After this, I lost no time in purchasing my old friend from the proprietors of the coach, which I did for the reasonable sum of thirty-five guineas. When grazing in the meadows near the highroad, he listens for the horn, and always trots cheerfully down to the gate to see the coach pass.

"I subjoin a statistical account of the career

of Latch-key, showing the difference between buying and selling.

Foaled in 1828.			
Sold in 1833	.	.	£120
Repurchased 1838	.	.	£80
Sold in 1838	.	.	200
Repurchased 1841	.	.	37
Sold in 1842	.	.	75
Repurchased 1845	.	.	25
Sold in 1846	.	.	75
Repurchased 1850	.	.	35
			<u>£470</u>
			<u>£177</u>

“So that this horse returned to me, in his sales and purchases in the course of twenty-two years, a net sum of two hundred and ninety-three pounds! We make no mystery as to his age, since money would no longer buy him; but during his career as a marketable animal, Latch-key chanced to be never more than ‘eight years old!’ He is now twenty-seven, and a cleverer animal could not be found.”

As my host finished his account of the career of his now old favourite, Latch-key confirmed it with a whinny, accompanied, however, by a significant shake of his head, which might have implied: "I wouldn't trust you, even *now*, if a good offer came in your way!"

CHAPTER XI.

The Coach and Horses (sign of)—Beware of bog spirits—Tell that to the Marines—An early breakfast—Salmon poaching with lights—Am I the man? or, the day of judgment—Acquittal!

THE Coach and Horses was the sign of a small roadside inn in North Wales, beautifully situated, as far as scenery and landscape were concerned, but as the house was built upon the steepest part of a severe hill, it was as difficult to stop in descending as it was inviting to "pull-up" in the ascent.

The house was kept by an old coachman, whose family consisted of his wife, daughter, and son, a boy twelve years old.

The old man's knowledge of the requirements necessary to make both man and horse comfortable, acquired for him a just reputation, and tourists (especially with their own horses) frequently made the Coach and Horses their headquarters from which to make expeditions into the country. Two fast coaches changed horses, up and down, daily, serving as antidotes to the usual dulness of a country inn.

Some years ago I was making a "drag-tour" through that part of the country, and, one of my wheelers having picked up a nail, I was compelled to halt for some days at the Coach and Horses. At any other time I should have enjoyed some fishing, but the season had closed. I passed the time in rambling amongst the magnificent scenery which the country afforded, devoting my attention to the objects of natural history with which it abounds, and taking advantage of the coaches for a lift home when I exceeded my

distance. On one of these occasions I had been led far into the wildest part of the hills in endeavouring to watch a dispute between a kestrel and a raven, which interested me so much that I was quite unmindful of time, distance, or direction, and found myself at dusk completely lost. No landmark, no guide of any description to suggest my course. I had come out "down wind," but the wind may have changed! There was the sunset, *et voilà tout*.

A thick fog now began to rise, entirely concealing every trace of outline.

To light a pipe and sit down upon a rock to consider what was to be done, was all that remained to me.

The darkness increased rapidly, and, with the rising vapour, soon rendered it impossible to see a yard in advance. The situation was grave. I knew I was in the neighbourhood of steep declivities, and therefore decided upon remaining

where I was till the fog lifted and there was more light.

The time passed heavily, and the scene would have been gloomy in the extreme, if the busy lights of the Jack-o'-lanterns had not kept me constantly on the *qui vive*. These singular visitors appeared to venture nearer and nearer to my sheltering rock and endeavour to entice me to follow them, bounding and dancing down the hill before me, and joining a host of other lights which appeared to be holding high revel in the valley beneath.

The mist thickened into a drizzling rain, which made the darkness even darker, and caused my weird companions to flit about with increased activity. So natural were these appearances that I could scarcely refrain from following one larger light which appeared to be sent forward to escort me, venturing each time nearer and nearer to my stony refuge.

If any of my readers have involuntarily passed a night upon a Welsh mountain, they will know what mingled distress and pleasure the dawn produces—distress, because, however cold, wet, and miserable you may have been during the night, the dawn brings with it a change of atmosphere which runs through your bones, and causes your whole frame to shiver; and the waiting for the light, intolerable pleasure, because, with the return of glorious day, come relief and light.

The longed-for light at length began to creep amongst the boulders and the heather, and show me once more how wisely I had decided in remaining still, instead of attempting to feel my way in any uncertain direction, surrounded as I was by deep ravines and precipices.

Tired, wet through, and with aching bones, I began my peregrination, and after walking some two miles through the hills I espied a cottage,

to which I directed my steps in the hope of getting some refreshment. To my surprise and joy, I found a woman at the cottage who was evidently expecting some arrival. I had some difficulty in making the woman understand that I appealed only for a glass of milk. She spoke nothing but Welsh, and appeared much alarmed at my visit. If it had not been for the opportune arrival of two men (peasants), one of whom spoke English, I might have failed to obtain even the modest hospitality I so much needed.

After some conversation, in which I described myself and my position without reserve, we were all, within a few minutes, supplied with an ample bowl of hot oatmeal porridge.

The cottage was situated in a lonely glen, thickly studded with brushwood, but I could discern no road leading to it. I had made my way across the hills, and on inquiring the distance to the Coach and Horses, I found it was five miles.

Feeling that my unaccountable absence must have given rise to some anxiety, I was eager to depart as soon as I had finished breakfast, and with that view had arranged with the peasant to conduct me to the highroad. Suddenly, as we were about to leave the cottage, the door was rudely forced open, and two men, entering, seized me by the collar, saying: "We're looking for *you*."

"Then I'm glad you've found me," said I; "for the good people at the Coach and Horses must have been much distressed at my disappearance."

"They won't be distressed when they hear that you've got three months for this job."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean! Why, we mean that we have been a-watching of you all night."

"I wish you had made your presence known," said I. "I would have made it worth your while."

“Ah, but we don’t do business in that way. No, no! a good catch like this for us is better than a good catch of fish is for you. We saw your lights a mile off.”

I was more puzzled than ever. Except an occasional fusee for my pipe, and the marsh-light, I had passed the whole weary night without seeing a light at all.

But on further explanation I began to comprehend that the river-watchers had suspected me of having been flame-poaching all night, and followed me to the cottage.

I protested that I was no poacher, but a benighted tourist who had accidentally lost his way upon the hills, and that I could prove my assertions if taken to the Coach and Horses.

All I could say was of no avail, and with a fellow-prisoner—a peasant, now brought in—I was marched off to Rhyadder; where, at eleven o’clock on the same day, we were taken

before a bench of magistrates, charged with having "unlawfully, by means of torches and spears, captured salmon during the night season."

An anxious night had been passed at the Coach and Horses in consequence of my absence. Messengers had been despatched in all directions to inquire and search; and it was not until my messenger arrived, requesting the landlord of the Coach and Horses to come at once and identify me, that the apprehensions of my friends were allayed.

To prove my innocence was by no means so easy a task as it would appear. Two river-watchers swore point-blank to having seen me and my fellow-prisoner at the edge of the pool fishing with torches, that they watched us for a considerable time, and at daybreak followed us to the cottage where we were apprehended.

The oaths of these two men, combined with

circumstantial evidence, were so strong against me that I almost doubted whether I had been poaching or not! My urgent declaration that I had been sitting upon a rock all night seemed weakish; it wouldn't "wash." I overheard one of the magistrates whisper to his neighbour something about "a cock-and-bull story."

I had well-nigh broken down in my *alibi* when the landlord of the Coach and Horses rushed into court. But he could only identify me as the missing gentleman.

"Where did you pass the night?" was the repeated question from the Bench. I had never found so much difficulty in accounting for myself during a night in my life; and my assurance that I had been benighted upon a mountain gave rise to much merriment amongst the audience, salmon poaching being at that time a very common offence in Wales. On the other hand the two river-watchers had sworn that they had followed

us, step by step, from the pool to the cottage—a distance of two miles—and that they had never lost sight of us. The fact proved to be that they had followed and apprehended two men, but the second poacher had slipped out of the cottage when the watchers entered, and *I* had slipped into his place !

My landlord of the Coach and Horses pleaded earnestly for my acquittal, but facts are stubborn—so are Welsh justices ; and it was with the greatest reluctance that the Bench consented to release me on bail, to come up again for judgment in a week, during which time further inquiry would be made into my statement.

My triumphant return to the Coach and Horses was an occasion of much rejoicing, though I believe there are some who to this day have felt disinclined to acquit me of all complicity in the salmon poaching foray.

When the day of judgment arrived I took with

me "young David," the son of the landlord, and sought the cottage from which I had been so roughly taken. My disappointment was great at finding the house closed and the door barred, having no appearance of occupation about it. I was turning away in despair when we heard the bleating of a calf, which showed the place was not altogether deserted.

We resolved to wait till the evening set in, concluding that someone interested in the young calf would respond to its pitiful appeal; nor were we wrong in our surmise. As the evening closed in we espied a woman in the distance, leading a black cow towards the house. We lay in ambush till matters were sufficiently advanced to prevent an abrupt appearance from interrupting the domestic arrangements, and then, taking David to interpret for me, I asked the woman if she remembered having seen me before.

Apparently much alarmed, she flew into a

rage, denouncing me in terms which, David informed me, were anything but complimentary, and declaring that I had betrayed her husband and brother, and caused them to be apprehended by the watchers. It took some time to "moderate the rancour" of this lady's tongue, but when we had brought her to reason, she agreed to come forward and state in the court that I had come to the cottage, on the morning in question, before her husband and brother, and had not seen them till we met at the cottage. Questioned about her brother, she said he had sailed for America.

Armed with this evidence, I presented myself before the bench of magistrates at the appointed time. The woman had kept faith, and was present, although not called, for the watchers had become a little shaken in their belief; and inquiry having been made, and proving satis-

factory, I was at once acquitted. Not so my fellow-prisoner, who, this being his fourth conviction, was sentenced to six months' hard labour.

CHAPTER XII.

Coaches in Ireland fifty years ago—Warm welcome—Still-hunting—Another blank day—Talent and temper—The Avoca coach.

BEFORE the reign of King Bianconi in Ireland, the coaching and all public conveyances were of a most primitive description.* I am writing of Ireland fifty years ago, when it was a real pleasure to have intercourse with the peasantry; when every look was a smile; when the hardest raps with a shillelah were accepted as additional tokens of friendship;

* So primitive was the manner in which draught-horses were used that I know an instance of horses being attached to a plough by the hair of their tails.

and if a few heads were broken it was looked upon simply as part of the fun of the fair.

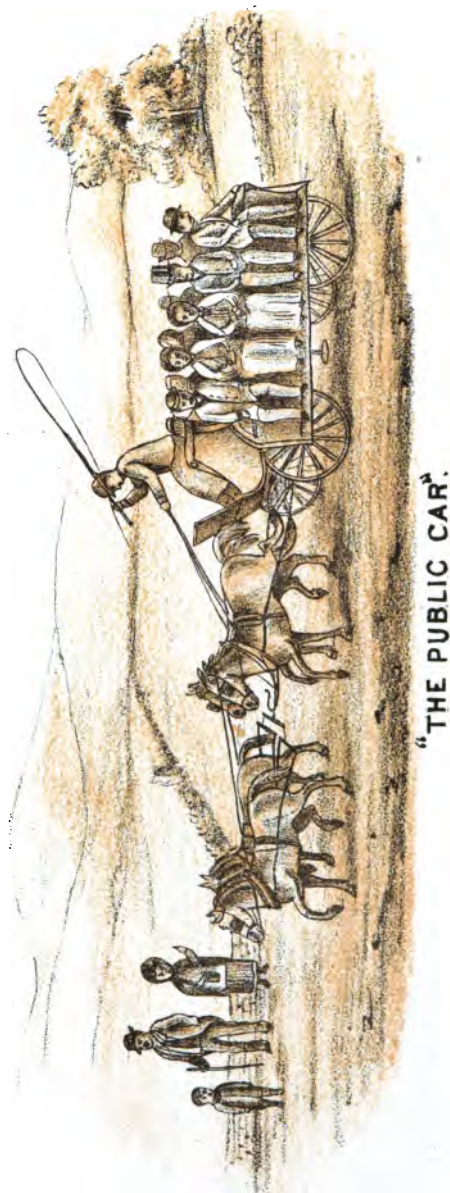
Hospitality is no word for the overflowing welcome which was invariably extended to a stranger, and the sincerity of the men was only equalled by the fascination of the softer sex. The ready repartee, the quick appreciation of wit or satire, were ingredients which gave zest to conversation and piquancy to a society unlike that which may be met with in any other country.

In the same degree, the peasantry, as far as their humble means would permit, were ever ready to display their kindly feeling towards a stranger, no matter of what social grade.

As a soldier in those days I had some disagreeable duties to perform, but these were frequently rendered less painful by the very people against whom these duties were directed. I allude, for example, to "still-hunting." It was the rule

in those days for the gauger, whose duty it was to hunt up all illicit stills in the country, to make a requisition for a party of military, to supervise and surround the suspected spot, prevent the escape of those concerned in the manufacture, and secure, if possible, the worm of the still. The latter part of the triumph was seldom achieved ; a small steel worm, which would go into a man's hat, would take a party of gaugers a long night to hunt for, and often wind up with a blank after all.

I was detached from the headquarters of my regiment at the town of Ballingarry, Limerick. I had been out as usual with my gun in the bogs, which, in that neighbourhood, abounded in snipe, and having dined in my snug quarters (the lodge at the gate of the Protestant minister's demesne), had just finished my tumbler of "hot stoppings," when the thump of an open palm



against my door announced a visit from my sergeant-major.

“Here’s the gauger, sir; and he wants our men to capture a still.”

A cold frosty night outside, and a clear turf fire within, with other pictures of comfort, did not help to inflame my soul with military ardour in the prospect of a still-hunt among the mountains five miles off. I was bound, however, to interview the gauger, and thereupon there entered a stout man, with a very blossomy nose, dressed in rusty black, who, at my invitation, seated himself by the fire.

“I have a requisition for twelve rank and file to assist in capturing a still in the neighbourhood, and here, sir, is the fee.*

* The requisition fee for a party in those days was accompanied by the tender of a guinea to the officer in command.

“When do you propose to make the expedition?”

“We should leave this at eleven to-night, and as no suspicion is aroused, we shall probably capture the lot, still and all.”

I pushed the materials towards the gauger, who required very little persuasion to avail himself of the opportunity to brew a hot tumbler of punch. On many former occasions I had by judicious hospitality kept this functionary at bay until it became too late, or the weather set in too bad, to make a start, thus saving my men the harassing duty we all disliked.

Now, however, the summons was imperative; and I accordingly turned out my picquet, and started with the revenue officer and his assistant for a mountain some five or six miles distant from my post.

The moon was shining brightly, and the sharp frosty air of the night was most exhilarating.

The light and springy step of my riflemen suggested the idea of being on a poaching lark rather than a solemn expedition for the vindication of the law.

We had left the highway and ascended a few hundred yards of the mountain-road, when the gauger pointed out to me a light curling white cloud, distant about a quarter of a mile, rising as if from the ground. That was the still.

Extending my small force, I formed a cordon round the point, gradually closing in, till within fifty yards of our object. This operation completed, I left further proceedings to the gauger.

Suddenly my attention was attracted by the melancholy wailing of a woman, and, on investigation, I discovered an old hag who might easily have been great-grandmother of all the stills in the district.

“Och-hone, och-hone ! We’ll all be kilt

entirely. We'll all be kilt outright wid dem soldiers. Och-hone!"

The gauger now reappeared. His search, both for men and machinery, had been fruitless. At once the old woman opened upon him a broadside of execrations such as are rarely heard even from the lips of an infuriated Irish beldame, strangely mixed with benedictions—the curses for the gauger, the blessings for me.

"To the divil I pitch them gaugers. Long life to y'r honour. Bad cess to 'em, I'd bail 'em out of —— (purgatory?) ev they'd wait. Och, thin, God bless you and y'r min! And thim to say I had a still!—the blag-g-a-ards!" All the time never moving from her seat amongst the ferns, whence she challenged the gaugers to search the skibeen and welcome. "Bad luck to you and your ugly mate!"

Finding the fun was over, I assembled my

men and started on the homeward march ; but wishing to reward the ancient sibyl for her blessing with a taste of tobacco, I halted the party in the road for a minute, and hurried back.

"You're lucky not to have had your still discovered," I remarked.

"Oh thin, good luck to your honour, and it's you and your min saved it. May you live till the longest tooth in your head makes a walking-stick for you."

"How do you mean, my good woman?"

"Sure the boys seen the soldiers coming, and they lighted a bit fire to blind 'em. The gauger was never near our plant; and for the worm, I was sitting on it all the time."

I gave the old woman a blast for her pipe, and drank a tot of the best potheen I ever tasted.

To revert to the subject of Irish coaching which, as I have said before, was of the wildest and most primitive description, before the great mail contractor monopolised nearly every road in the country, conveying both mails and passengers on cars in a manner much better suited to the taste and habits of the people.

What the original coaches lacked in neatness they made up in pace. It was no uncommon thing to see a team brought out to attach to a coach, one blinded with a rubber, two with twitches on their noses, and the fourth having his leg tied up till the moment of departure. I once started from Waterford under these circumstances, and when all was ready, at the moment of starting, the coachman having climbed up, with his rope reins in hand, began shouting, cheering, and rattling his feet against the footboard to make them start. On this I reminded him

that his whip was lying on the top of the luggage behind him.

“Oh, bad luck to 'em! I wouldn't show 'em that till they'd ask for it,” was the answer. “Sure they'd never lave home if they thought I'd take that along wid me.”

They did start, with the vocal assistance of half the spalpeens of the city, who followed us barefooted for at least a mile—an Irish mile—out of the town.

There is no country in the world where so many clever horses are bred as in Ireland. I say clever in the general acceptation of the word, for an Irish horse is as great an adept at an argument with his driver as he is in the falling at once into the latter's views, and performing all that he can expect from him with cheerfulness.

I have generally found in my experience that a horse with a bad temper is a good stayer; while,

on the other hand, an animal with a little temper, easily got the better of, is a cur.

A horse in Ireland is never allowed to have a bad temper; he only rises to tricks.

I was driving in Dublin some time since to catch a boat, and the horse in the car, after being very refractory, lay down. I was very much incensed, and afraid of losing my passage, when the driver quietly said:

“Oh, don’t mind him, sir; it’s only *tricks*.”

Since the reign of Bianconi the travelling has very much improved. The long car, substituted for the coach, is by no means an uncomfortable carriage, and the weight being kept so near the ground reduces the chances of being upset to a minimum. The roads are extremely good, and the scenery in some parts indescribably beautiful.

A revival of coaching was attempted in

Dublin in the year 1879, but it did not attain any great proportions. There was one coach, however, with which I was intimately connected, which ran from the Sherbourne Hotel, Dublin, to the Vale of Avoca, and enjoyed a fair share of success. It was a private venture, was well horsed and appointed, changing four times in fifty-four miles (down one day and up another), and performing the journey in six hours, including a liberal interval for lunch each way.

This route embraces one of the most beautiful parts of Ireland, through the county of Wicklow, and the coach was consequently much encouraged by tourists and foreigners.

When the days of Land League and low rents (no rents) shall be buried in oblivion, and the country restored to the condition which I have described as its natural social aspect fifty

years ago, I have no doubt that this and many other roads out of Dublin will be as thickly covered by amateur coaches as are the suburban roads from London.

CHAPTER XIII.

Virtue and vice—Sowing wild oats—They can all jump—
Drive down Box Hill—A gig across country.



HE intelligence of the horse, and his judgment in hesitating to perform feats which, if attempted, must result in dangerous accidents, have afforded many proofs of equine sagacity. On the other hand there are bolters and kickers which indulge in these vices apropos to nothing, and at times when a bad accident must inevitably ensue.

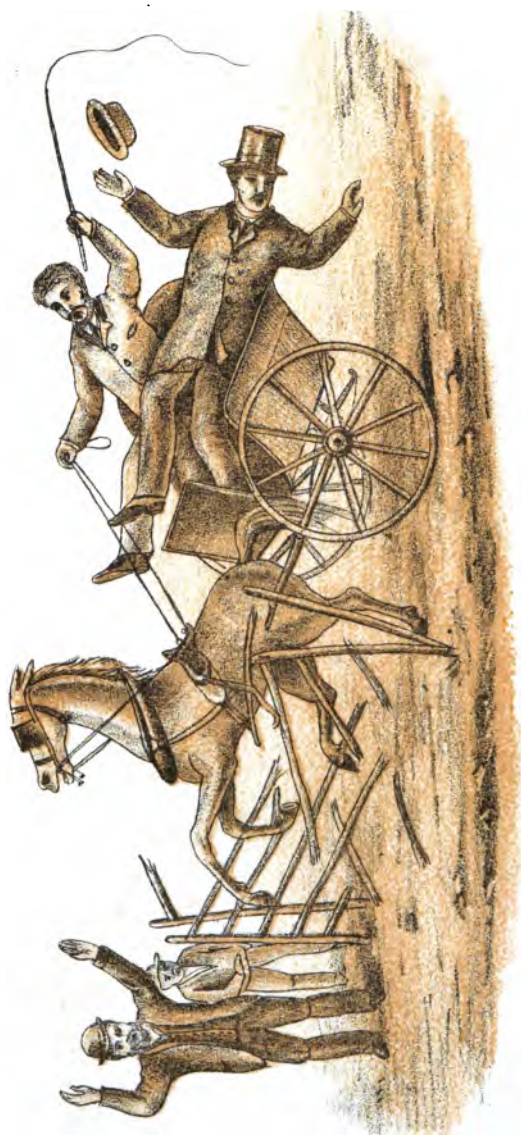
The worst vices of the horse are comprised in the *two* faults I have named. "Bolting" means shying, running away, shifting suddenly out of the road, or turning round short without

notice. "Kicking" includes all the damage that can be inflicted on man, carriage, harness, etc., by a living catapult tipped with iron.

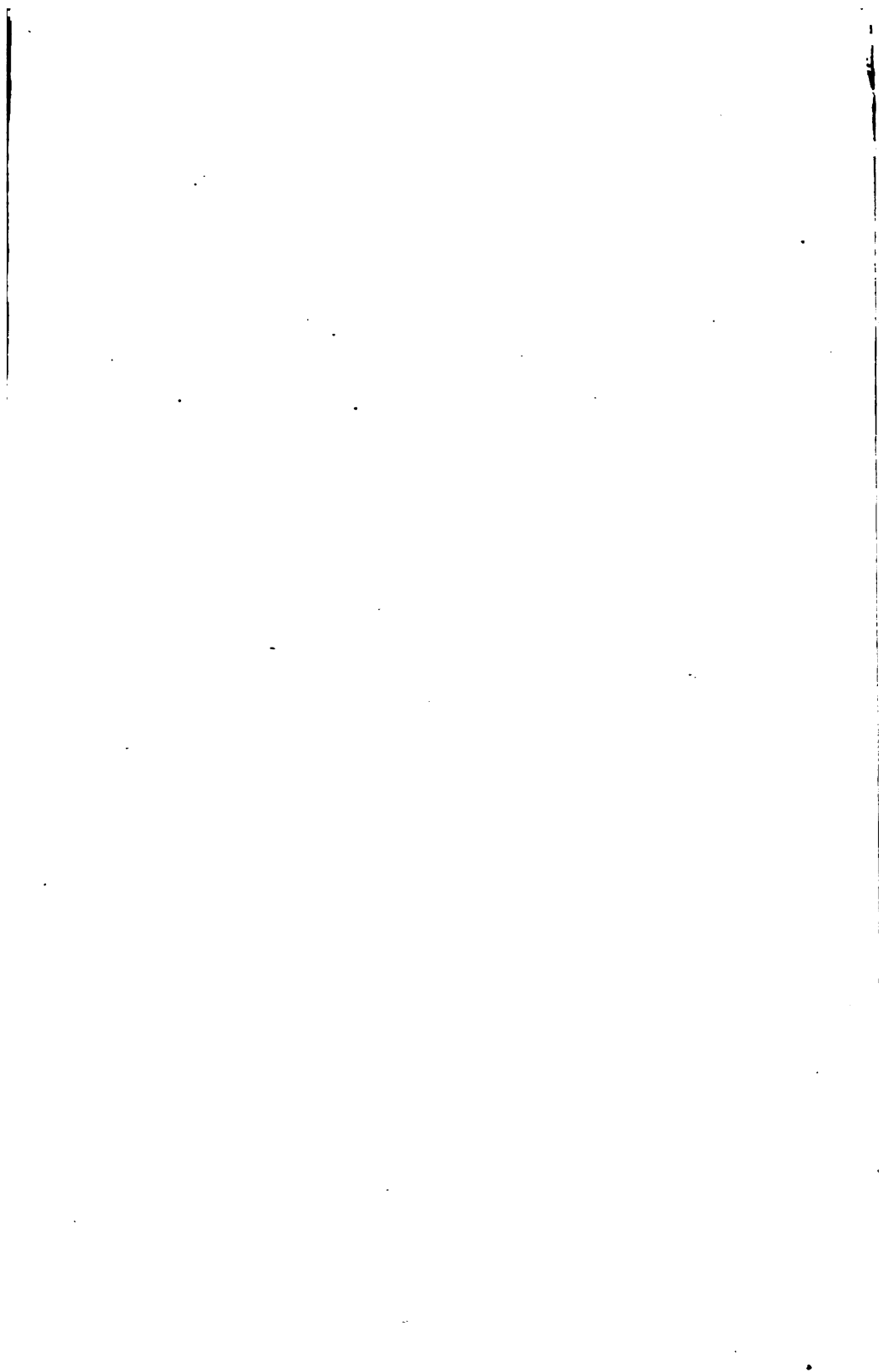
There is a third defect—one of character—denominated "sulk." This is most tiresome and trying, and, if not carefully and promptly dealt with, may never be eradicated.

One thing is quite certain, that punishment will not avail. Patience offers the only chance. If the weather be fine and the driver in no particular hurry, a daily paper is an excellent antidote to this evil.

I knew an instance of a sulky horse being checked when he attempted to move, and forced to stand in one place almost in one position, till his owner had read through *The Morning Post* (advertisements and all), taking care to rustle the paper occasionally in order to let the animal know the cause of his detention. So effectual was this remedy, that his master had only to



"WILL HE JUMP?"



show him a newspaper to make him start like a lamb.

If, as is sometimes the case, a horse be absolutely determined not to move, and defies all the usual methods of persuasion—holding up the fore-leg, tying whip-cord tightly round his ear, pushing at the wheel, etc.—but throws himself down as if purposing to remain there, nothing is left but to put a wisp of straw under him, and set it alight. This, albeit it sounds cruel, need not inflict the slightest injury—since the horse at once obeys the instinct of alarm and pain, and never forgets the experience; so that straw, without the match, will always be sufficient for the future.

The ready obedience to his rider's wishes, even when the horse's own judgment does not confirm them, is another proof of the animal's generous nature.

We constantly hear of young men sowing wild oats, but the *récolte* is seldom, if ever, sufficiently successful to enable them to feed their horses upon the produce. There is indeed a *morne* silence in respect to the germinating of this seed, which suggests the inference that no crop can be expected till the grain has perished and the granary is bare!

A young friend of mine was driving his team through some unfinished streets in one of our favourite marine resorts. Not being much practised in the art of "pointing his leaders" in the direction which he intended to pursue, he allowed them to continue a straight course in a road which had no egress, but was blocked at the end by a dwarf wall three feet in height. A friend on the box beside him, finding he had passed the turn by which he could have got out, called to him:

"Hallo! pull up, man! You can't get out, and you can't turn round."

Slacking his hand and fanning his wheelers, the young Jehu quietly replied :

"Never mind ; they can all *jump*."

And they did all jump. No refusal. The leaders got clear over without a scratch ; the wheelers, having broken the pole and splinter-bar, got over the wall, but of course fell in a confused heap, and were a good deal hurt. The gentlemen on the box were shot to a considerable distance into some "ground to be let for building purposes" which lay convenient, "rubbish" being also shot there !

Many of my readers may remember that during the severe frost in the year that made the fortune of Murphy's Almanac, Mr. Hunt, the successful rival of Messrs. Day and Martin in the manufacture of blacking, drove his team and drag across the Serpentine ; a foolhardy

feat, seeing that the Serpentine was a treacherous lake, and at that time of uncertain depth, both of mud and water.

Another instance, which illustrates forcibly the courage and obedience of the horse, may be in the reader's recollection.

A gentleman drove his curricie and pair down Box Hill in Surrey, a descending declivity upon which most horses would find it difficult to stand, even without a carriage.

One more example I may adduce—which, had I not been an eye-witness of it, I should find it difficult to believe—illustrates the courage of the horse and the folly of the man.

A dealer was showing a horse, in harness, to a customer who, after a short trial, finding that the animal was likely to suit him, inquired if he would jump. Being assured that he

would, the intending purchaser requested that a hurdle might be set up.

Another gentleman, probably Irish, then assumed the vacant seat in the tilbury, and to the dealer's utter amazement the horse was dashed at the obstacle.

There was no refusal; the obedient animal bounded at the hurdle (a good stiff one), was brought up by the wheels and shafts of the gig, and tumbled backwards into the vehicle, uninjured.

The results to the gentlemen were less than their folly deserved—a broken collar-bone apiece—sprained wrists, and various contusions, at least severe enough to confine them to their beds for several days.

I now humbly submit these my Road Scrapings to the reader, in the earnest hope that I may have, in some measure, cleared the way for

those who are disposed to avail themselves of my suggestions, and enlivened it for those who are not.

THE END.

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